

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CAREER TRANSITION ON ATHLETES AND  
MILITARY PERSONNEL: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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Sarah A. Shue

## EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CAREER TRANSITION ON ATHLETES AND MILITARY PERSONNEL: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Sport and exercise psychology practitioners work with military service members to enhance performance prior to and during active duty but have no clear role during military career exits. Given health and wellness concerns veterans face as they transition out of the military and reintegrate back into civilian life, it may be of benefit to establish non-VA practitioners as a transitioning resource. To determine sport and exercise psychology practitioner preparedness to address military to veteran transition needs, similarities and differences between transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans is needed.

A mixed methods approach, known as a convergent design, compared the transition experiences of 42 athletes and 64 veterans (N=106) during the quantitative phase and 9 athletes and 15 veterans (N=24) during the qualitative phase. The quantitative phase consisted of independent sample t-tests to determine differences in outcome scores for four valid and reliable measures: Satisfaction with Life Scale, World Health Organization's abbreviated quality of life measure, Career Transition Inventory, and Patient Health Questionnaire Depression Scale. The qualitative phase consisted of recorded semi-structured phone interviews, which gathered information regarding an individual's career transition experience.

Overall, athlete participants represented 14 sports from the National Collegiate Athletic Association and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics universities. Veteran participants came from each military branch and a variety of pay grades. Quantitative analysis revealed athlete and veteran participants scored similarly on each outcome measure or domain. Veteran participants had lower physical health and social relationship domain scores, but comparatively better transition control scores. Qualitative analysis revealed four themes: 1) the necessity of preparation for the transition process, 2) factors impacting the career transition process, 3) transitioning resulted in the loss of structure, and 4) establishing oneself outside of former career.

Results indicate shared outcomes and perspectives between former athletes and veterans in regard to their career transition process. Transition process similarities indicate sport and exercise psychology practitioners may be qualified to effectively assist transitioning veterans in the same capacity they assist transitioning athletes.

Niki Munk, PhD, LMT, Chair

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Undergoing a transition from one role to another can cause an individual to experience decreased life satisfaction, emotional distress, and lower overall quality of life (Ebberwein, Krishok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004). The transition of interest in this study is the career transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans. Independent research has established athletes and veterans experience similar issues when transitioning out of their careers, such as lacking other skills due to a narrow career focus (e.g., IAVA, 2016; Stein-McCormick, Osborn, Hayden, & Van Hoose, 2013) and concerns regarding financial stability (e.g., Park, Lavalley, & Tod, 2013; Robertson, 2013). However, there is no current research that draws comparisons between the career transition experiences of both athletes and veterans. Given the difficulty that veterans have transitioning out of their military role and reintegrating back into civilian life, these individuals may require regular care and support. In order to fully meet the potentially extensive needs of veteran patients, Veterans Affairs (VA) clinicians may choose to collaborate with non-VA practitioners. Due to similar factors associated with the transition experience for athletes and military veterans, one such group of practitioners meriting consideration are those within the field of sport and exercise psychology. Establishing comparisons between former athletes and military veterans regarding their career transition experience is important considering practitioners within the field of sport and exercise psychology may be suited to assist veterans who are transitioning out of their military career.

Practitioners within the field of sport and exercise psychology are regularly involved with athletes who are retiring from sport and transitioning out of their athletic role. Considering former athletes and veterans have similar factors associated with their career transition experience, SEP (sport and exercise psychology) practitioners may be well prepared to assist transitioning veterans. SEP practitioners are also present among military personnel prior to deployment, which indicates an already established connection between the field and the military. In this regard, SEP practitioners work to help prepare military personnel for combat through various programs (e.g., Total Force Fitness and the Comprehensive Family and Soldier Fitness Program; Graber, n.d.). With experience aiding athletes through the transition of career exit and an already established presence within the military, SEP practitioners may be well equipped to meet the needs of veterans who are transitioning out of military roles.

### **The Military Career**

A veteran is defined as an individual who has “served in the active duty military, Coast Guard, uniformed Public Health Service, and the uniformed National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, reservists called to active duty, and those disabled while on active duty training” (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010, p.51). Veterans are likely to have experienced a variety of transitions throughout their career (Johnson et al.; 2007). One such transition all veterans experience is reintegration. Reintegration is defined as “the process of transitioning back into personal and organizational roles after deployment” (Currie, Day, & Kelloway, 2011). In the past post-deployment was regarded as the terminal phase of the deployment cycle. Recently, however, military operations have required units to be repeatedly deployed in combat theaters, which forces service

members and their families to face the stress of preparing for other deployments after reuniting.

### **Unique Challenges of a Modern Military Career**

Multiple deployments are one aspect of a military career that illustrate how a modern military career differs from those in the past (Stein-McCormick, et al., 2013).

Not only are service members in today's military experiencing the possibility of multiple deployments, meaning they are going through the four phases defined earlier (Johnson et al., 2007) multiple times, thus increasing the psychological burden of deployment.

Additionally, they fight enemies that are not always clearly understood; unlike in the past when battle lines were well established, combat situations in today's military may take place among hills and mountains, in the middle of a busy street, or in back alleyways (Cornum, Matthews, & Seligman, 2011). These operations can become strenuous for individuals given they must always be vigilant and prepared to take action.

Improved medical services and improved body armor have increased the likelihood that wounds that would have previously been fatal are now survivable (Stein-McCormick, et al., 2013). In the cases of amputations, technology has improved the use and functioning of prosthetic devices for wounded veterans. On the other hand, technology improvements have also improved the effectiveness of weaponry, resulting in more injuries. Those who experience injuries from military service report difficulties with readjusting back to civilian life. A previous study (Katz, Cojucar, Davenport, Pedram, & Lindl, 2010) found those who had suffered injury had difficulties on the following measured constructs: global readjustment, career challenges, health concerns, intimacy,

social, concerns about Iraq, and PTSD, all of which impact a service member's ease of transition back into civilian life.

### **Military Career Transition**

While severity may vary among individuals, it is common for military personnel to experience difficulty when reintegrating, or transitioning, back into their former civilian lives. In a recent survey of approximately 1,500 veterans from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, 81% indicated they experienced challenges when transitioning out of the military (IAVA, 2016). These participants cited 3 main challenges associated with their transition: loss of identity and purpose, finding/keeping employment, and mental health concerns. Addressing and overcoming these challenges is incredibly important for the health and well-being of these service members. As one example, a study of National Guard troops who had been deployed to Iraq found that an increase in stressors related to the readjustment back to civilian life positively and significantly correlated with an increase in suicidal ideation (Kline, Ciccone, Falca-Dodson, Black, & Losonczy, 2011). Similarly, in a 2016 survey of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, 40% had considered taking their own life since joining the military (IAVA, 2016). For these individuals, access to care is crucial; any delay may be detrimental to someone who is considering taking their own life. Unfortunately, those in need of immediate care may not always receive it. One member of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) organization indicated in the annual member survey why a delay in care is so concerning:

“I was in a very dark mental space. They were able to get me an appointment the next day at the VA. The funny thing is I had been trying to schedule with the VA for the previous 3 months, but they kept sending the appointment times out during my work hours. If I had been able to get in to see someone at the VA, that dark place could have been dealt with quicker...” (IAVA member, 2016 survey)



Additionally, former military personnel indicate extended delays in receiving responses regarding a VA claims decision. Seventy-nine percent of those filing claims indicated a wait of over 125 days (IAVA, 2016). Of those who submitted a claim in 2015, 39% also filed an appeal and of these individuals, 39% indicated they were not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal. At the time of the survey, approximately 645 of the participants in the 2015 IAVA member survey indicated an appeal wait time of 6 months or longer. Again, delay in care or financial compensation for care could be potentially harmful for a veteran's health.

Given the concerns associated with a lack of prompt access to care and claims, utilizing other practitioners as a resource for working with these individuals may be incredibly important. One such group worth consideration are practitioners within the field of sport and exercise psychology.

### **Sport and Exercise Psychology**

Sport and exercise psychology is defined as the “scientific study of people and their behaviors in sport and exercise activities and practical application of that knowledge” (Weinburg and Gould, 2014). Researchers in the field aim to understand a) how psychological factors affect a person's motor performance and b) how participating in physical activity affects a person's psychological development. Applied sport and exercise psychology focuses on psychological factors that influence participation and performance in sport and exercise, the psychological effects derived from participation, and theories and interventions that can be used to enhance performance, participation, and personal growth (Williams, 2010).

## **Sport and Exercise Psychology in Athletics**

SEP practitioners engage in research, education, and/or application (LeUnes, 2008) and mainly work with athletes and coaches (Weinburg and Gould, 2014). Applied SEP practitioners focus on the application of sport psychology in various sport and exercise settings (LeUnes, 2008). Other aspects of applied SEP are the use of psychometric instruments for talent identification or assessment of characteristics as they relate to performance. Those in applied SEP also utilize interventions to enhance performance, such as biofeedback, meditation, cognitive behavior modification, attentional control training, mental rehearsal, progressive relaxation, and visual imagery.

**Assisting Transitioning Athletes.** SEP practitioners also help prepare athletes for life after sport. Practitioners help transitioning athletes develop skills related to social, educational, and work-related functioning (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Considering less than one percent of college athletes make it onto professional sports teams, these skillsets are urgently needed for athletes at the collegiate level. SEP practitioners also engage in career counseling, which helps athletes identify areas of interest outside of their sport and encourage athletes to seek out resources and avenues of training for jobs in their field of interest. Interventions that SEP practitioners use also focus on helping athletes develop generic social and interpersonal skills that can help the individual present themselves well in interviews and enhance job performance (Anderson & Morris, 2000). This type of development also helps athletes transfer skills developed through sport into other areas of life. SEP practitioners also work with athletes to transfer skills used to enhance athletic performance (e.g., relaxation, positive self-talk, imagery), which benefit an athlete's ability to cope with stressors outside of sport.

## **Sport and Exercise Psychology in the Military**

SEP focuses on performance and mental control during physical exertion. Due to this focus, other professions such as non-sport performers (e.g., dancers, circus performers), business professionals, and tactical occupations (e.g., first responders and military) have gained interest in the field of sport and exercise psychology (Graber, n.d.). The use of sport and exercise psychology within the military is not surprising given the parallels between sport and the military cultures that go as far back as the ancient Olympic Games (Goodwin, 2008); many of the sports practiced in the Olympics have evolved from basic tasks of the military that require marksmanship (e.g., archery, rifle), overcoming physical defenses and obstacles (e.g., pole vault, long jump), and hand-to-hand combat (e.g., wrestling, judo). To further elaborate on the connection between sport and military, today's military combat operations have evolved from larger formations to smaller units that present similarities to the structures of team sports, such as hockey or football. Hammermeister, Pickering, McGraw, and Ohlson (2010) illustrated the similarity between team sports and small-unit combat operations, which both require individuals to perform in a complex and dynamic environment, utilize a combination of perceptual, cognitive and motor skills, obtain a tactical advantage over their opponent, act upon partial or incomplete information evolving over time, work both independently and as a team in an effective manner, and operate under stressful conditions. However, one drastic difference between the two groups is the requirement of military personnel to develop and maintain a high level of performance while engaging in a variety of tasks in environments that may require focus on survival can present extreme stress (Goodwin, 2008).

Over the years, the military has examined issues related to stress, its impact on military personnel, and these personnel members' performance in combat situations (Goodwin, 2008). Under the belief that a soldier can maximize performance by mastering thinking habits and emotional and physical states, sport psychology has become increasingly utilized for performance enhancement within the United States military (Williams, 2010). The Army Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP) trains soldiers from their version of mental skills training (MST) that comes primarily from the field of applied sport psychology (Graber, n.d.). MST, also known as performance psychology, frequently includes concepts such as goal setting, imagery, attention control, visualization, and breathing techniques, just to name a few. Training incorporating these topics is aimed at increasing the mind-body connection by enhancing a soldier's performance through key aspects such as increased confidence and attention and managing one's emotions and corresponding energy levels. Applied military training drills incorporate these skills to gain automatic use, which is important to have before being deployed into real missions (Graber, n.d.). These skills may serve individuals well as they engage in military activities such as marksmanship, combat diving, and parachuting (Zinsser, Perkins, Gervais, & Burbelo, 2004).

It has been argued that if the psychological skills presented to military personnel are truly related to optimal human functioning, aspects of MST could provide a buffer against adverse psychological effects that might result from exposure to combat situations (Hammermeister et al., 2012). Psychologists in general could provide education and training in these psychological performance skills to military personnel. However, SEP practitioners may be better equipped given their training more specifically

focuses on learning the aspects of MST and conducting trainings with their clients.

Therefore, it is of worth to consider what role SEP practitioners could have in providing assistance to military personnel who are transitioning out of their careers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Sport and exercise psychology practitioners work with military service members to enhance performance prior to and during active duty but have no clear role during military career exits. Comparison between transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans could determine SEP practitioner utility in addressing military to veteran needs. Determining similarities and differences between the experiences of transitioning athletes and veterans provides SEP practitioners a foundational understanding of their ability to work with those transitioning out of the military in a manner similar to how they work with transitioning athletes. The similarities and differences between transitioning athletes and military veterans were determined through the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. This mixed methods approach provided objective health information from both populations, as well in-depth understanding of their lived transition experiences. The mixed methods approach used in this study is known as a convergent parallel design. This design equally prioritized both the quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transition experiences of both athletes and military veterans.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed:

1. How do transitioning athletes and military veterans compare in regard to both perceived physical and mental health?

2. How do the experiences of transitioning athletes compare to those of transitioning military veterans?
3. What is the relationship between perceived physical and mental health and the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans?

### **Study Aims**

This study had the following three aims:

1. Compare perceived satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition barriers and resources, and mental health of former athletes and military veterans who have transitioned or are currently transitioning out of their careers within the past 24 months.
2. Compare the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans.
3. Determine the relationship between satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition barriers and resources, mental health, and the transition experiences between former athletes and military veterans.

### **Significance**

This study provides insight into how sport and exercise psychology can expand its role and presence within the military. Research has not yet determined what role sport and exercise psychology may have in assisting military personnel transitioning out of their career. The proposed research aimed to address this gap by establishing a foundational understanding of the similarities that exist between transitioning athletes and transitioning military personnel. Identifying similarities in the transition experiences of these individuals provides practitioners within the field of sport and exercise psychology

with a foundational understanding of the potential role they may have in addressing the care needs of transitioning military personnel.

A mixed methods design known as a convergent parallel design was used to collect and equally prioritize quantitative and qualitative data. The use of both types of data provided a more comprehensive view of the transitioning experiences of athletes and military personnel. Use of this approach also addressed methodological gaps present in the sport and exercise psychology and military literature. Sport and exercise psychology research frequently uses quantitative research methods that are correlational or comparative in nature (Meredith, Dicks, Noel, Wagstaff, 2017). This is a trend mirrored in veteran research, as the majority of the studies focused on recent veterans (i.e., Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn) have been quantitative correlational or comparative in nature and lack a qualitative perspective (Wands, 2013). In recent years, qualitative research has gained credibility (Thomas, Silverman, & Nelson, 2015). However, the combination of both qualitative and quantitative data in a mixed methods design is not a common approach (Meredith et al., 2017). Mixed methods research provided a more comprehensive view on the career transition experiences for both study participant groups than either quantitative or qualitative methods could solely accomplish (Creswell, 2011). A mixed methods design brings together the differing strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses of quantitative methods (large sample size, trends, generalizability) and qualitative methods (small N, details, in-depth). The convergent parallel design used in this study allowed for the comparison and expansion of quantitative results with qualitative findings (Creswell, 2011). This research also addressed the need for qualitative data and in-depth understanding of the transitioning

experiences of both groups, as well as the lack of mixed methods research in the field of sport and exercise psychology.

A significant amount of research highlights important issues military personnel may face when returning from deployment and the fact that these issues complicate reintegration (Yosick et al., 2013). Little information exists in the literature that specifically assesses or discusses the experiences or needs of service members during the time of career transition. Additionally, few studies have addressed the strategies military personnel have used to overcome difficulties faced during the transition back to civilian life. The proposed research aimed to address these gaps in the literature.

### **Subjectivity Statement**

The lead researcher is a doctoral candidate in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. As a result of being involved in sport and exercise through her life, the researcher has had an interest in exploring the benefits of physical activity and mental skills training in a large realm of domains, including the military. The current research further advances that interest by helping to understand the role SEP practitioners may have in assisting transitioning military personnel. The lead researcher aimed to understand the similarities and differences between the transition experiences of these populations; a more thorough understanding of similarities and differences between the two groups may provide additional resources for both former athletes and military veterans to seek out when in need. It is important to recognize the unique perspective of the researcher, which could influence data interpretation. To mitigate this potential concern, the researcher practiced reflexivity in interpretation of the qualitative data.



## **Definitions and Terms**

ACEP:	Army Center for Enhanced Performance
IAVA:	Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
MST:	Mental skills training
NAIA:	National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics
NCAA:	National Collegiate Athletic Association
OEF:	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF:	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OND:	Operation New Dawn
SEP:	Sport and exercise psychology
VA:	Veterans Affairs
VFW:	Veterans of Foreign Wars

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the literature relating to the study. Included in this review is literature relevant to career transitions more generally, as well as the specifics of a sport- and military-career transition. Comparisons are also made between theories and factors associated with the transition experiences of both former athletes and military veterans.

#### **Transition**

Transition can be defined as “an event or non-event that results in a change in assumptions regarding oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships” (Schlossberg, 1981, p.5). Transitions may involve normal life events, such as retirement, graduation, or marriage, but they may also include situations of extreme hardship, such as recovery from a natural disaster or incarceration. Non-events are situations that are expected to occur but never happen. The concept of a non-event is particularly relevant to a military career transition given a job search may not be as fruitful as one previously expected (Robertson, 2013).

The definition and concept of transition developed out of crisis theory, which posits that people generally operate in consistent patterns and solve problems with minimal delay by utilizing habitual mechanisms. However, when usual problem-solving techniques no longer work, tension may arise and the individual can experience anxiety, fear, a feeling of helplessness, and disorganization (Moos & Tsu, 1976). While crisis theory presents the concept of transition with a negative connotation, the outcome of transition is not always negative. In fact, often the outcome of a transition can include

both positive and negative aspects (Schlossberg, 1981); aspects of a transition may provide benefit (e.g., a more extended support system) and challenge (e.g., not knowing what resources are available). As people move through life, change and transitions are a given and with these changes come new networks of relationships, behaviors, and self-perceptions.

### **Career Transition**

Hall (1976) defined a career as the “individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of a person’s life.” It consists of an accumulation of role-related experiences over time (Louis, 1980). Much of the earlier research on careers focused exclusively on the objective aspects of careers, such as the normal sequence of advancements in a particular occupation or the organizational hierarchy (Louis, 1980). However, subjective aspects of a career, such as an individual’s changing attitudes and values, needs and aspirations, self-assessments and self-concept, are also taken into consideration when defining a career. As such, career transition is a specific type of transition that may be defined as “the period during which an individual is either changing roles (taking on a different objective role) or changing orientation to a role already held (altering a subjective state)” (Louis, 1980, p.330).

### **Theoretical Perspectives of Career Transition**

Included in this section are the theoretical perspectives that will inform this study:

1) the model of human adaptation to transition and 2) role exit theory.

## **Model of Human Adaptation to Transition**

The ability to successfully adapt to changes is important for one's state of well-being (Schlossberg, 1981). Adaptation to a transition is "a process during which an individual moves from being totally preoccupied with the transition to integrating the transition into his or her life" (Schlossberg, 1981, p.7). Even though there appears to be some general pattern to adaptation, different types of transitions may have particular patterns. The ease of adaptation will depend upon the individual's ability to "balance individual resources and deficits in the transition setting" (Schlossberg, 1981, p.7).

Schlossberg's model (Figure 2.1) illustrates adaptation to transitions stemming from life events, such as retirement, as a process in which adaptation to transition is determined by the interaction of three sets of factors: perceptions of the transition, characteristics of the pre- and post-transition experiences, and characteristics of the individual.

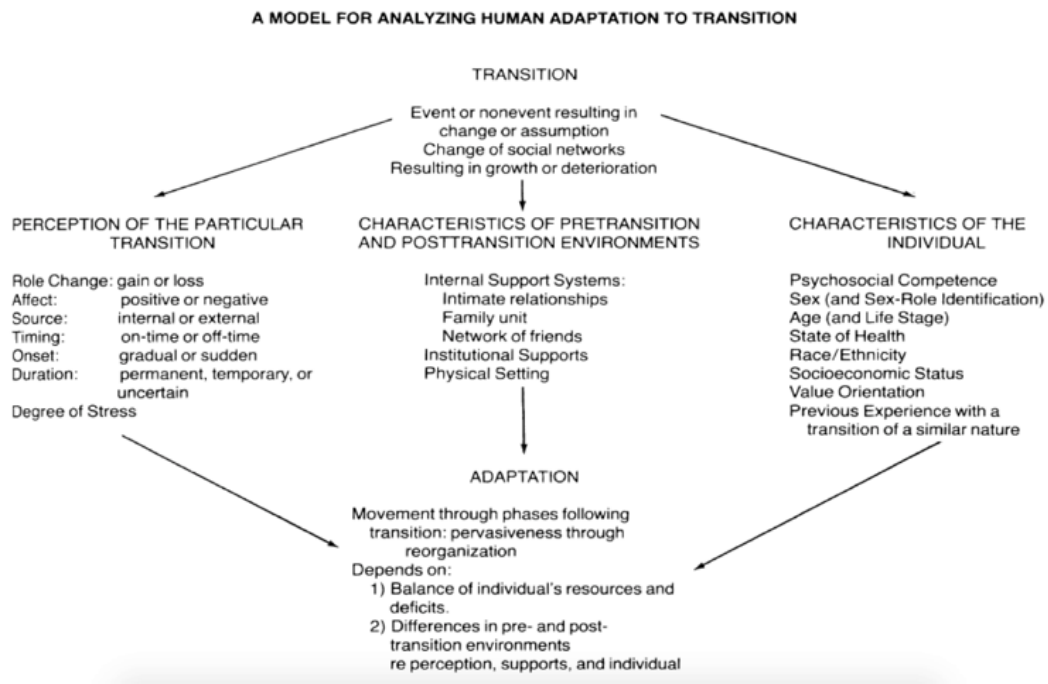


Figure 2.1. A Model for Analyzing Human Adaptation to Transition, Schlossberg, N. K. (1981). *The Counseling Psychologist*, 9(2), 2-18.

**Perceptions of the transition.** This model includes a common set of variables that can describe transitions: role change (gain or loss), affect (positive or negative), source (internal or external), timing (on-time or off-time), onset (gradual or sudden), duration (permanent, temporary, or uncertain), and degree of stress (Schlossberg, 1981).

**Role change.** Not all transitions involve role change, yet it is commonly experienced (Schlossberg, 1981). Some role changes involve gains (e.g., marriage or becoming a parent) or loss (e.g., divorce, becoming widowed). During career transition, role change appears to be an inherent part of the process (Louis, 1980). Individuals undergoing a career transition will have to orient themselves in the differences between old and new roles and role orientations, which likely involves both gain(s) and loss(es).

**Affect.** Some changes may generate feelings of pleasure (positive), while others are more painful or difficult (negative). It is likely that most transitions involve elements of both positive and negative affect and may be the source of stress for an individual (Schlossberg, 1981).

**Source.** Sources of transition may either be internal or external. Internal transitions are those that come about as the result of careful deliberation on the part of the individual. Those that are external are forced upon the individual by others or situational circumstances (Schlossberg, 1981). It has been hypothesized that external sources of transition are more difficult as one perceives to have little control over one's own life.

**Timing.** Transitions, such as marriage or having children, may be linked by a person's age and a built in "social clock" (Schlossberg, 1981). Not engaging in activities according to this "clock" can result in an individual feeling late, or off-time (as it is defined in the model). While the concept of a social clock has shifted over the years, it still lingers and can result in an individual feeling deviant or out of place.

**Onset.** Many transitions are expected, either because they are inevitable or the result of deliberate decisions. These types of transitions are said to be gradual, in which an individual prepares for the changes resulting from the transition (Schlossberg, 1981). When an individual is unprepared for sudden and unexpected transitions, the process becomes more difficult to manage.

**Duration.** The duration of a transition can be viewed as permanent, temporary, or uncertain. The perceptions surrounding a transition, especially those that are unpleasant, can change an individual's outlook if it is known that the difficulty is of limited duration

(Schlossberg, 1981). Changes that are negative and uncertain in duration likely result in the most stress and negative affect, given it is unclear when the event will end.

***Degree of Stress.*** The final characteristic of transition to be considered in Schlossberg's model is the degree of stress that is involved. The level of stress involved in any given transition is, to some extent, dependent on the characteristics that were previously described. Any change transition causes some stress. The ability of an individual to adapt to transition is influenced by the level of stress that they are experiencing.

**Characteristics of the pre- and post-transition environments.** The concept of environment is to be understood in its broadest sense and includes the following aspects: interpersonal support systems, institutional supports, and physical setting.

***Interpersonal support systems.*** Schlossberg's model (1981) presents three different types of interpersonal support systems: 1) intimate relationships, 2) the family unit, and 3) the network of friends. Intimate relationships involve trust, support, understanding, and the sharing of confidences and are increasingly important resource when an individual is experiencing a stressful transition. The organization of a family unit and its ability to remain flexible during a transition can be an influence on an individual's ability to successfully adapt (Schlossberg, 1981). Finally, the presence of friends may serve as a cushion for a sudden shock associated with any given transition. A network of friends can be a source of mutual support and comfort when faced with a difficult transition (Schlossberg, 1981).

***Institutional supports.*** Institutional supports are agencies or occupational organizations to which an individual can turn to for help. Other types of institutional

supports may be religious institutions, political groups, social welfare, or other community support groups (Schlossberg, 1981). Ritual occasions that mark particular transitions, such as weddings, funerals, or graduations, are also considered under the categorization of institutional supports.

***Physical setting.*** Physical settings in Schlossberg's model (1981) broadly include the weather and climate, urban or rural location, neighborhood, living arrangements, and workplace. All of these factors may contribute to an individual's level of stress, sense of well-being, and may factor into adaptation to a transition. Considerations are also given to topics such as "personal space" and sensory deprivation and how these factor into an individual's physical environment and the impact it may have on transition adaptation (Schlossberg, 1981).

***Characteristics of the individuals.*** Characteristics of individuals considered in the model are: psychosocial competence, sex (and sex role identification), age (and life stages), state of health, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, value orientation, and previous experience with a transition of a similar nature (Schlossberg, 1981).

***Psychosocial competence.*** Personality variables and behaviors have been proposed as influences on an individual's success or failure to adapt to a transition. However, understanding the impact of characteristics, such as attitudes of one's self and the world, on the transition experience is somewhat limited and may also depend on one's life stage (Schlossberg, 1981).

***Sex (and sex role identification).*** Males and females are socialized to different attitudes and behaviors. The extent to which an individual conforms to these norms may



influence how they adapt to a transition. However, more research is needed to understand the influence of sex differences (Schlossberg, 1981).

***Age (and life stage).*** Aging is another aspect of personal characteristics that is difficult to fully understand in regard to adaptation to transition. The process of aging itself consists of a series of events that require adaptation; biological and psychological changes over one's lifespan, such as puberty or menopause, may be regarded as transitions themselves (Schlossberg, 1981). Therefore, an alternative viewpoint to chronological age is the consideration of an individual's life stage (e.g., young, middle-aged). Coping to transitions may be more connected to life stages rather than an individual's age. The concept of life stages versus chronological age is a consideration made in research regarding career changes (Hall, 1976).

***State of health.*** An individual's health may impact the ability to adapt to a transition and serve as a source of stress itself. Poor health may constitute as a transition, in which the individual recovers and experiences lasting effects (e.g., being reminded of one's own mortality) or the illness may be chronic, in which the individual experiences a decline in physical resources and energy and becomes unable to adapt to the transition (Schlossberg, 1981).

***Race/ethnicity.*** The impact of one's race or ethnicity is likely mediated through other factors, such as value orientation or cultural norms (Schlossberg, 1981). These may influence the resources and types of support that are available to an individual experiencing a transition.

***Socioeconomic status.*** The relationship between adaptation and socioeconomic status is not always clear (Schlossberg, 1981). The general idea is that individuals of

lower socioeconomic status (SES) are limited in their resources, both material and psychological, and may experience a difficulty in focusing what is available to cope with a transition. On the other hand, one study found that those of high status experienced a greater exposure to stress, likely as a result of a more varied lifestyle.

***Value orientation.*** An individual's values and beliefs can factor into one's ability to adapt (Schlossberg, 1981). Values can ease a transition (e.g., finding comfort in religion in dealing with the death of a loved one) or cause dysfunction (e.g., going through a divorce and feeling distressed because of a particular religion's stance on divorce).

***Previous experience with a transition of a similar nature.*** An individual who has successfully adapted to a transition in the past will likely be successful at adapting to another transition that is of a similar nature (Schlossberg, 1981). On the other hand, an individual who was defeated or made vulnerable by a previous experience will likely result in a decreased capacity to cope with transitions in the future.

## **Role Exit**

The concept of role change, or role exit specifically, is present in Schlossberg's model (1981) of human adaptation to transition and is integral to how some researchers have viewed and defined career transition (e.g., Louis, 1980). Role exit is considered a unique transition because it involves simultaneously learning a new role while withdrawing from the values, norms, and expectations of a former role (Ebaugh, 1988). Ebaugh (1988) defines role exit as "the process of disengagement from a role that is central to one's self-identity and the reestablishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account one's ex-role". Disengagement involves withdrawing with the

behaviors associated with a role. Role exit also involves disidentification and resocialization. Disidentification occurs when an individual begins to dissociate their self-identity with the role being exited. Resocialization is when an individual is disengaging from previous role expectations while learning new ones. While the types of roles being cited in this study may vary greatly, it is argued that the process of role exit is identifiable and generalizable across a variety of roles (Ebaugh, 1988). Role exit consists of four stages: 1) first doubts, 2) seeking alternatives, 3) the turning point, and 4) creating the ex-role.

**Stage 1: First Doubts.** Individuals begin to question and experience doubt related to their commitment to the role. Some circumstances that may give rise to doubt could be organizational changes, job burnout, disappointments, and drastic change in relationships.

**Stage 2: Seeking Alternatives.** Once an individual begins to experience doubt, they may seek out and consider alternatives. In this stage, an individual may display behavior that signifies discontent with the current position, shifting reference groups, and role rehearsal. Individuals engage in these rehearsals to determine the level of “fit” within a new social role (Ebaugh, 1988).

**Stage 3: The Turning Point.** After alternatives have been identified and considered, new reference groups identified, a cost-benefit analysis conducted, and rehearsing new roles, an individual is faced with a decision of whether or not to exit a role. There are five types of turning points: 1) “Specific events”; 2) “The Last Straw” (culmination of a build-up of emotions); 3) “Time-related factors” (aging); 4) “Excuses” (justifying leaving the role); and 5) “Either-or-alternatives” (either exit or lose

something). In this stage, an individual announces his or her decision and begins to prepare the emotional and social support that will be needed to act on the decision (Ebaugh, 1988).

**Stage 4: Creating the Ex-Role.** The final stages involve “creating and adapting to an ex-role once one has actually left” (Ebaugh, 1988, p. 149). During this stage, an individual will likely experience tension between one’s past, present, and future. The identification from a former role becomes a part of the individual’s future identity.

Schlossberg’s (1981) model of human adaptation to transition has been used to illustrate the experiences of transitioning athletes (e.g., Swain, 1991; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Drahota & Eitzen, 1998; Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Cote, 2009; Surujlal & van Zyl, 2014) and military personnel (e.g., Robertston, 2013; Greer, 2017). A specific concept of Schlossberg’s model (1981) of human adaptation to transition is that of role change. The concept of role change, or role exit, is another theoretical perspective of career transition and has been used in both athletic (e.g., Drahota & Eitzen, 1998) and military career transition studies (e.g., Napahn & Elliott, 2015). As such, Schlossberg’s model of human adaptation and the concept of role exit will be used to address the purposes of this study and better understand the transition experiences of both former athletes and military veterans.

### **The Sport-Career Transition**

Transition from sport is an inevitable event for athletes that can be a planned and expected personal choice but it may also result from an unplanned event, such as a career-ending injury, chronological age, or de-selection (Lavalley and Wylleman, 2000). A sports career tends to be much shorter than many other careers, with most athletes

leaving their athletic role in their mid to late 20s (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). These athletes must eventually move into “second” careers and, unfortunately, with the demand of training and competing schedules, they often have an imbalance of other activities outside of sport. This imbalance may lead to a lack of non-sport related skills, resulting in limited opportunities at the end of one’s sport-career and potential difficulty in the sport-career transition (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).

### **Progression of Theoretical Perspectives of the Sport-Career Transition**

Recognizing this as a concern for the overall health of former athletes, studies began focusing on athlete career transitions in the late 1960s and have shown a substantial increase since the end of the 1980s (Stambulova et al., 2009). Since then sport-career exit research has evolved from studies focused solely on the termination and negativity that may surround it, to views that are holistic, incorporate the entire lifespan, and approach understanding the transition process in a multi-level manner that considers an athlete’s well-being during *and* after their sport career (Stambulova et al., 2009). Early studies also viewed transition from sport to be analogous to retirement from a working career, which was equated by some to social death (e.g., Rosenberg, 1984). As a result, early theoretical frameworks used for describing the sport-career transition were derived from social gerontology (study of the aging process) and thanatology (stages of dying), which were commonly used to explain retirement from a working career.

**Social Gerontological Theories.** Social gerontology concentrates on the interaction between society and the aged and attempt to explain the lives and activities of those who appear to have aged successfully (Lavalley and Wylleman, 2000). As a result, many of these theories and models have been used to describe the general process of

retirement. Within the context of sport, the following theories have been frequently utilized.

**Thanatological Models.** Thanatology is the study of the process of death and dying and has been equated to the end of a sport career (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998). The models being discussed in this section have been used to explain the various stages of athletic retirement. Considering models of thanatology have been developed using non-sport populations, they are often criticized as being inadequate when used to capture the experience of athletic retirement (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). However, they may still serve as a useful guide when understanding various aspects of a transitioning athlete's experience.

These viewpoints considered athletic retirement to be a negative and, often, traumatic event, which is rarely the case for retiring athletes (Lavallee and Wylleman, 2000). Another criticism of thanatological and social gerontological views of retirement is the depiction of retirement from sport as a singular, abrupt event; research was beginning to view the sport-career transition as a process (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Finally, while these earlier perspectives viewed athletic retirement as a form of social death, research was beginning to suggest termination from sport actually serves as an opportunity for social rebirth (Coakley, 1983). As these criticisms grew, it became apparent that social gerontological and thanatological theories and models might no longer be accurate depictions of athletic retirement.

**Transition Models.** Many of the earlier studies on the termination of a sports career were motivated by concerns for athletes after withdrawal from sport and the belief that this withdrawal may be a form of distress (Coakley, 1983). In recent years, the view

of retirement from sport has shifted from being considered a negative change event to focus on factors and interventions that help former athletes properly prepare for and adapt to the transition (Torregrosa, Boixadós, Valiente, & Cruz 2004). In order to better understand sport retirement from this perspective, new models were needed in the sport research. Transition models accomplish this as they consider retirement to be a process rather than a singular event, as it is depicted in social gerontological and thanatological models (Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000).

***Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Career Transition.*** The most frequently utilized model of transition within the sport literature is the model for analyzing human adaptation to transition proposed by Schlossberg (1981). Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) acknowledged that Schlossberg's model addressed transition as a process, but indicated it lacked operationalized detail of specific components relative to sport. To better capture the experience of transitioning athletes specifically, they developed a multi-dimensional, sport-specific career transition model that addressed all relevant concerns of a transitioning athlete, from initiation to ultimate consequences. The model, as seen in Figure 2.2, includes the following stages: 1) causes of career termination; 2) factors related to adaptation to career transition; 3) available resources for adaptation to career transition; 4) quality of career transition; and 5) intervention for career transition.

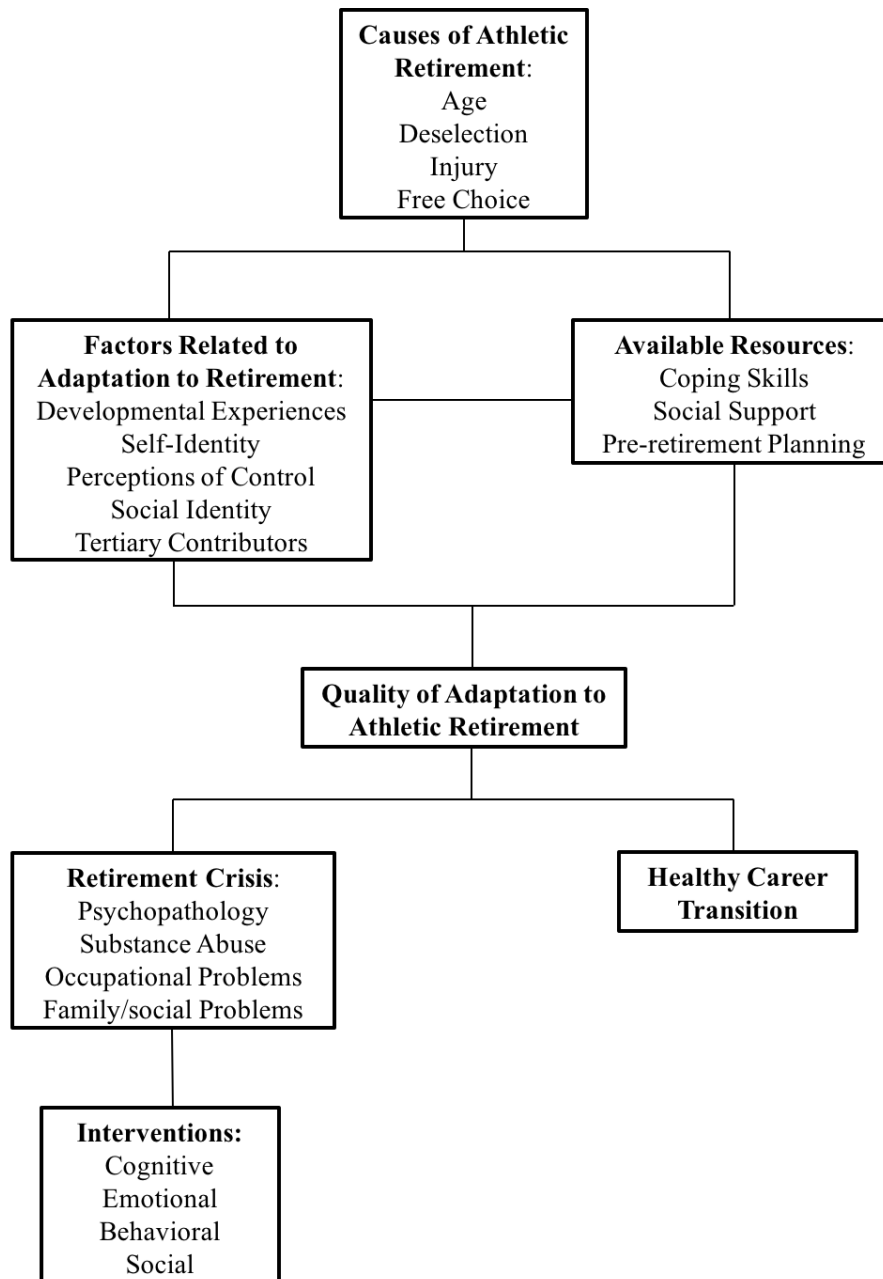


Figure 2.2. A conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes, Taylor, J., & Ogilvie, B. C. (1994). *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 6(1), 1-20.

*Step 1: Causes of Retirement Among Athletes.* Four factors most frequently cause termination of an athletic career: chronological age, deselection, the effects of an injury,



and free choice. Age, deselection, and injury are involuntary reasons for athletic retirement.

*Step 2: Factors Related to Adaptation to Retirement.* When athletes are faced with the end of their careers, they can experience a wide range of psychological, social, financial, and occupational changes (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). An athlete's perception of these changes will determine the quality of adaptation of their transition.

*Step 3: Available Resources for Retirement Adaptation.* An athlete's adaptation to the transition out of sport is highly dependent upon whether or not the individual has enough resources available to handle difficulties that may arise. Factors that have been found to influence an individual's ability to effectively respond to problems associated with transitioning are coping skills, social support, and appropriate pre-retirement planning (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

*Step 4: Quality of Adaptation to Athletic Retirement.* Quality of the transition out of sport is dependent upon the previous steps of the retirement process. In this stage of transition, the athlete's general response to the transition will become apparent (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000).

*Step 5: Intervention for Athletic Retirement Difficulties.* Changes associated with the transition out of sport may negatively impact an athlete psychologically, emotionally, behaviorally, and socially. To ensure proper adjustment, each of these areas must be addressed in treatment (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

There are qualitative studies in the sport-career transition literature (e.g., Swain, 1991; Parker, 1994) that support the applicability of Taylor and Ogilvie's Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Career Transition. While not theory driven, this model

incorporates prior theoretical and applied considerations within and outside of the sport domain (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

### **Athletic Role Exit**

Ebaugh's (1988) process of role exit has been used to capture the experience of athletes transitioning out of sport (e.g., Drahota & Eitzen, 1998). Drahota and Eitzen (1998) opted for this approach given that it focuses on mid-life transitions (and not just those accompanying old age), it applies to roles centrally important to individuals, and because it provides a conceptual framework for understanding the stages those exiting from sport experience. While the researchers concluded that the stages of role exit generally applied to athletes, there were four modifications made to better fit the model to the experiences of athletes. First, they included a new stage of "original doubts" that precedes becoming an athlete. These original doubts arise before an athlete ever enters the role of athlete; individuals recognize the great odds against becoming a professional athlete and, as a result, begin planning for another career before they ever achieve that level. Findings from their study also indicate a difference in which era an athlete played. Older athletes from the 1950's and 60's, before the glamour, limelight, media focus and money associated with being a professional athlete, presented an easier transition (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998). These older athletes were not faced with a near full-time commitment of an athletic career and could use the off-season to pursue other interests or goals (e.g., higher education). Therefore, the era of an athlete was important to include when applying role exit theory to athletes. The significance of the type of involuntary exit was noted and included. The two main types of involuntary exit are when an athlete is cut or released from the team and a career-ending injury (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998). Finally,

“withdrawal” behaviors associated with leaving sport were added. Drahota and Eitzen’s (1998) adapted model of role exit has been cited by other studies for understanding the role exit of athletes (e.g., Surujlal & van Zyl, 2014).

### **Factors Influencing the Sport-Career Transition**

While there are likely a plethora of issues that may influence an individual’s ability to transition, the following common factors and resources from the athletic transition literature were the focus of this study: 1) identity (self and social), 2) perception of control, 3) preparation and coping, and 4) social support.

**Identity.** An athletic identity is the degree to which an individual defines himself or herself in terms of an athlete role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Athletes who develop a strong athletic identity tend to experience greater difficulty transitioning out of their athletic role (Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000). A strong athletic identity can prove beneficial for sport performance, but detrimental as a pattern of self-identification when an individual has to transition out of their athletic role. Those who are overly invested in their identity and status as an athlete may experience a range of negative outcomes at the end of an athletic career (Baillie & Danish, 1992). These athletes, who become overly invested in their athletic identity, do so to the detriment of other areas of interest, thus limiting skills and knowledge that may be applicable to other non-sport careers (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).

**Perception of control.** The concept of being in control of a transition was presented previously in Schlossberg’s model of human adaptation (1981) as an aspect of the perception of the transition. In the model, the source of a transition is either external or internal; either the transition is unexpected and forced upon the individual by others or

circumstances or a deliberate decision is made on the part of the individual transitioning. External sources tend to make an individual feel as though they have little control over their own life.

For an athlete, one external and involuntary reason for transition out of sport is injury. Athletes transitioning out of sport due to an injury must face not only withdrawal from the sport, but also the process of rehabilitation from the injury (Murphy, 1995). Athletic identity is also associated with problems adjusting to a sport injury. Brewer et al. (1993) found athletic identity to be positively correlated with depressive reactions to actual and hypothetical sport injuries. Another common cause of exit from sport is deselection, or “being cut” (Coakley, 2006). As athletes age, they are more likely to experience this type of sport-career exit; decline in physical skills is associated with aging and these athletes become replaced with younger, more skilled athletes. When an athlete is forced to transition out of their athletic career in this manner it can be an especially difficult experience.

There are some cases in which an athlete voluntarily makes the decision to withdraw from their athletic career. Reasons for this decision may involve financial pressures associated with competition, a desire to spend more time with family, lack of life satisfaction, or the desire to pursue another career (Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000). One study found athletes who voluntarily retired from professional sport participation were more likely to report higher satisfaction with life, yet still indicated difficulty with retirement. This demonstrates that while the decision to exit is voluntary, it cannot be assumed that a voluntary career exit eases the career transition process (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

**Preparation and coping.** Exiting an athletic career requires athletes to cope with a new lifestyle on a social, physical, and personal level (Surujlal & van Zyl, 2014). Many athletes make successful, satisfying career transitions (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). However, those who have not properly planned for exiting their athletic role may not be prepared to cope with changes and are at risk of experiencing negative repercussions such as identity crisis reactions, emotional difficulties, and a potential decrease in self-confidence and life satisfaction (Surujlal & van Zyl, 2014). Coping may be defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to maintain age specific external or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the persons’ resources, cognitive appraisal, and reaction to the situation” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.141). Theorists have suggested that athletes who are more prepared for the transition and high in coping resources will be likely to experience less stress than athletes with few coping skills (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000).

**Social support.** Schlossberg’s model of adaptation to transition (1981) illustrates the importance of social support availability on the transition process. Social support has been defined as “an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient” (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984, p.13). A previous study found the support of family and friends to be a factor in determining the nature of the transition (Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Transitioning athletes who indicated a lack of support revealed a more difficult transition process. This highlights the importance of social support during this process. An additional source of support for transitioning athletes is their athletic institution.

Institutional support for athletes may come from their university or, for a professional, the organization they are a part of (e.g., NBA, NFL).

The sport-career transition is an experience that is complex and unique for each athlete (Coakley, 2006). Research and considerations around withdrawal from sport have evolved over the years to focus on the sport-career exit as a process rather than a singular, abrupt, and negative event. Although this section reviewed identity, perception of control, and coping as factors that may be associated with difficulty in the sport-career transition, it is important to highlight that there is contrasting evidence regarding the difficulties associated with exiting an athletic career (Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000).

### **The Military-Career Transition**

Similar to athletes, military personnel have unique career experiences that may influence the transition out of the military and the process of reintegration back into civilian life (Stein-McCormick, et al., 2013). The military is unique in that it is often considered to be a total institution (Goffman, 1961), where large numbers of individuals live and work together in close quarters while remaining physically separated from the larger society for a period of time (Naphan & Elliott, 2015). Entering into such an environment requires a great deal of personal change from the service member in order to live a suitable life within the institution. As a result of such change, entering back into the civilian world and “former lives” after a deployment may prove difficult.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Military-Career Transition**

The following section will focus on theories commonly utilized to better understand the transition of veterans out of their military role: 1) homecoming theory, 2) social climate theory, and 3) the 4-S Transition Model.

**Homecoming Theory.** Homecoming theory was developed after World War II to better understand challenges associated with transitioning out of the military (Ahern et al., 2015). This theory states that a traveler (i.e., a military service member) becomes separated from home by space and time and, while apart, family and friends back home have unique experiences during the time of separation. The service member and the people and environment(s) back home change during time apart and, as a result, each will become unfamiliar in ways that may result in shock upon the service member's return (Ahern et al., 2015). Homecoming involves reestablishing connections despite changes. This theory emphasizes feelings of disconnect or alienation that returning military personnel may face (Ahern, 2015).

**Social Climate Theory.** Results from one study (Ahern et al., 2015) also found that social climate theory was relevant to the issues expressed by returning service members. Social climate theory states that support, goal/task orientation, and structure organization are underlying characteristics of most institutions. Findings from Ahern et al.'s study (2015) indicated that the military provided personnel with caretaking behaviors, purpose, and structure, which parallels the focus of social climate theory.

**4-S Transition Model.** Schlossberg revised the initial human adaptation model (1981) into what is known as the 4-S Transition Model (Schlossberg, Water, & Goodman, 1995). The 4-S transition model has been recommended for use among transitioning military personnel as it allows the service member to take charge of the transition (Stein-McCormick et al., 2013). This framework includes four key factors that are believed to influence an individual's ability to cope during a transition: 1) the situation, 2) the self, 3) the support, and 4) the strategies.

***The situation.*** The situation involves considerations around what triggered or precipitated the transition, the timing of the transition, whether or not an individual perceives the transition to be in his/her control, is there a role change, whether an individual had a similar experience with a prior transition experience, are there other sources of stress present, and who is seen as responsible for the transition. Many of these aspects align with Schlossberg's previous model (1981), specifically the perceptions of the particular transition.

***Self.*** Within the 4-S model, "self" incorporates personal and demographic characteristics (e.g., SES, gender, age) that may influence how an individual views life. Psychological resources are also considered, such as outlook and commitment and values.

***Supports.*** Support consists of relationships, family units, networks of friends, and institutions and communities. These are the same types of support considered in the human adaptation to transition model (Schlossberg, 1981).

***Strategies.*** This final concept of the model involves the ways in which an individual is managing the transition. It also considers how effective these methods are in helping an individual cope with the transition.

### **Military Role Exit**

For combat service members, many of the conditioned and normative behaviors associated with the military, such as hyper-vigilance, aggression, and paranoia, are dysfunctional in civilian life (Naphan & Elliott, 2015), which can negatively influence the ease of exiting a military role. Additionally, expectations associated with being in the military become embedded into a service member's self-concept and it can become



difficult to relinquish to a new, non-military role. Individuals in the military also become accustomed to the structure of the military and transitioning out involves becoming more self-reliant, self-disciplined, and more organized in taking the initiative to accomplish tasks (Naphan & Elliott, 2015). Making adjustments in one's behavior and the role they occupy take can become challenging for a transition.

### **Factors Influencing the Military-Career Transition**

Similar to athletes undergoing a career transition, there are factors associated with the ease of transition for military personnel. One aspect that seems to be most influential and unique to the military-career transition is whether or not an individual experienced combat during deployment.

**Combat experiences.** Combat experiences during deployment may have a significant impact on a military personnel's transition and reintegration into civilian life (Adler, Britt, Castro, McGurk, & Bliese, 2011). For individuals who experience combat, the behaviors that are conditioned and considered normative in these situations (e.g., hyper-vigilance, aggression, paranoia) are considered dysfunctional in civilian life. Additionally, military personnel who were involved in combat situations may present injuries or psychological trauma; dealing with an injury or psychological trauma only complicates the process of reintegration for military personnel (Wands, 2013). In one study, veterans experiencing issues transitioning to civilian life beyond a year from their return home were more likely to be dealing with serious issues such as psychopathology and substance use problems (Ahern et al., 2015). This is not surprising given those who have engaged in combat situations are more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Westwood, McLean, Cave, Borgen, & Slakov, 2017). These issues

continue to negatively and cyclically influence an individual's ability to adapt to the transition back to civilian life.

### **Comparing Aspects of Athletic and Military Career Transitions**

The literature review of athlete- and military-career transitions reveals some similarities between the two transition experiences. The purpose of this section is to highlight some of those similarities, while also noting differences important for consideration.

#### **Narrow Focus on Respective Career**

As it was discussed with athletes, focus on a specific career while neglecting other interests can lead to a difficult transition. This imbalance results in a lack of additional skill development and knowledge outside of one's career, resulting in limited opportunities at the end of a career. This is an aspect contributing to a difficult sport-career transition that may also be representative of the transition experiences of military personnel. 56% participants in the IAVA member survey (2016) indicated that the most challenging part of a job search was finding a position matching their skill set. Similar to athletes, military personnel are typically focused on the demand of full-time training and work, preventing them from engaging in other activities and developing alternative skills sets. They also feel limited in their ability to apply military-related skills and abilities to private sector jobs (Stein-McCormick, 2013), which may result in financial difficulty.

#### **Financial Stability**

While the specifics surrounding financial struggles may differ between athletes and military personnel, the concept of financial stability and its impact on an individual's transition experience is applicable to both populations. As both athletes and military

personnel leave their respective careers, they may be unprepared to manage their finances. A systematic review of athletes' career transition out of sport found that athletes who experienced financial problems also had difficulties in their transition experience and felt limited in post-sport-career choices (Park et al., 2013). Similarly, military personnel may not be prepared to manage finances once they exit their career. Of the participants in the 2016 IAVA member survey, 74% of participants (approximately 1,100 service members) indicated that they did not have a comprehensive financial plan during their transition out of service. Additionally, one study (Robertston, 2013) found a small, negative correlation between the length of a service member's transition and income.

### **Perceived Control of the Transition**

Control of a transition is a concept present within the models and theoretical perspectives of sport- and military-career transition. Perception of control was discussed for athletes who are transitioning out of their sport; if an individual perceives a transition to be outside of one's control, the transition process may become difficult. Injury is a common unexpected and external event requiring an athlete to exit their sport career. This concept is similar among military personnel; service members who become injured and are no longer able to serve may experience difficulty transitioning out of the military, as they were not prepared for this transition (Wands, 2013). One difference to note is that the severity of injuries experienced by military personnel may greatly differ from athletes and have a significant impact on the transition process.

### **Support System**

One aspect of Schlossberg's model (1981) of human adaptation is the pre- and post-transition environment. This aspect is mainly comprised of the support systems that

an individual has in place to help ease adaptation to a transition. Social support has been defined as “an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient” (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984, p.13). The concept of a support system is prevalent in much of the research around the athlete- and military-career transition experiences (e.g., Werthner & Orlick, 1986; Robertson, 2013). Additionally, disengagement or disconnect from one’s social support system has been addressed in theories for both sport (e.g., Rosenberg, 1982) and military (e.g., Ahern et al., 2015) transitions.

For an athletic career transition, adapting to change depends largely on the availability of social support (Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000). In the study of Canadian Olympians, researchers found the support of family and friends to be a factor in determining the nature of the transition (Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Athletes in this study who suggested a lack of support indicated a more difficult transition process. Institutional support for athletes may come from their university or, for a professional, the organization they are a part of (e.g., NBA, NFL).

Family members can play an important role in helping military veterans negotiate transitions by being supportive and affirming (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). While these individuals may not completely understand what an individual has gone through during deployment, they can still serve as a beneficial support system. For transitioning military personnel, support from the institution of the military is also important. In one study, service members indicated experiencing a lack of support from the military, which may generate and exacerbate feelings of alienation (Ahern et al., 2015).

While this section has highlighted many similarities between transitioning athletes and military personnel, it is important to make note of differences that may have a significant influence on the transition experience of military personnel. First, service members are more likely to be placed in stressful, severe environments. While competing as an athlete may also be considered stressful, it does not compare to the stressful combat situations that military personnel may experience. As noted earlier, one drastic difference between these two populations is the requirement of military personnel to remain constantly alert in preparation of a potential attack (Goodwin, 2008). Also, while athletes may travel for competitions and be separated from family for a brief period of time, military personnel experience trainings and deployments that require them to be away for extended lengths. Athletes may also have more flexibility regarding moving and relocations, whereas military personnel are compelled to go where they are assigned, with little to no input. This separation and uncertainty can strain relationships with family and friends and the transition out of the military may become more difficult as a result.

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to career transition and focused specifically on the sport- and military-career transition, theoretical perspectives, and factors that influence each type of career transition. Additionally, comparisons were drawn between athletic and military career transitions in order to establish a connection between each type of transition. The following chapter provides an overview of the design and methods that were used in the study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

Using Schlossberg's model (1981) of adaptation to transition and role exit theory (Ebaugh, 1988) as a guide, the purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth understanding of the career transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans and compare and contrast these experiences. Results from this study provide SEP practitioners with a foundational understanding of the extent to which their training translates to and adequately prepares them to address the needs of transitioning veterans. To accomplish this purpose, the following three aims were addressed:

1. Compare perceived satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition barriers and resources, and mental health of former athletes and military veterans who have transitioned or are currently transitioning out of their careers within the past 24 months.
2. Compare the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans.
3. Determine the relationship between satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition barriers and resources, mental health, and the transition experiences between former athletes and military veterans.

A mixed methods approach, convergent parallel design was used to address these aims. A convergent parallel design equally prioritizes both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for each type of data to complement one another, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans (Creswell, 2011). Quantitative data assessed participants' life satisfaction, quality of life, psychological barriers and resources, and personal health experienced

during career transition. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews explored the experiences of career transition of former athletes and military veterans. Through this mixed method approach both quantitative and qualitative data provided a more complete understanding of how athletes and veterans compare in their transition experiences.

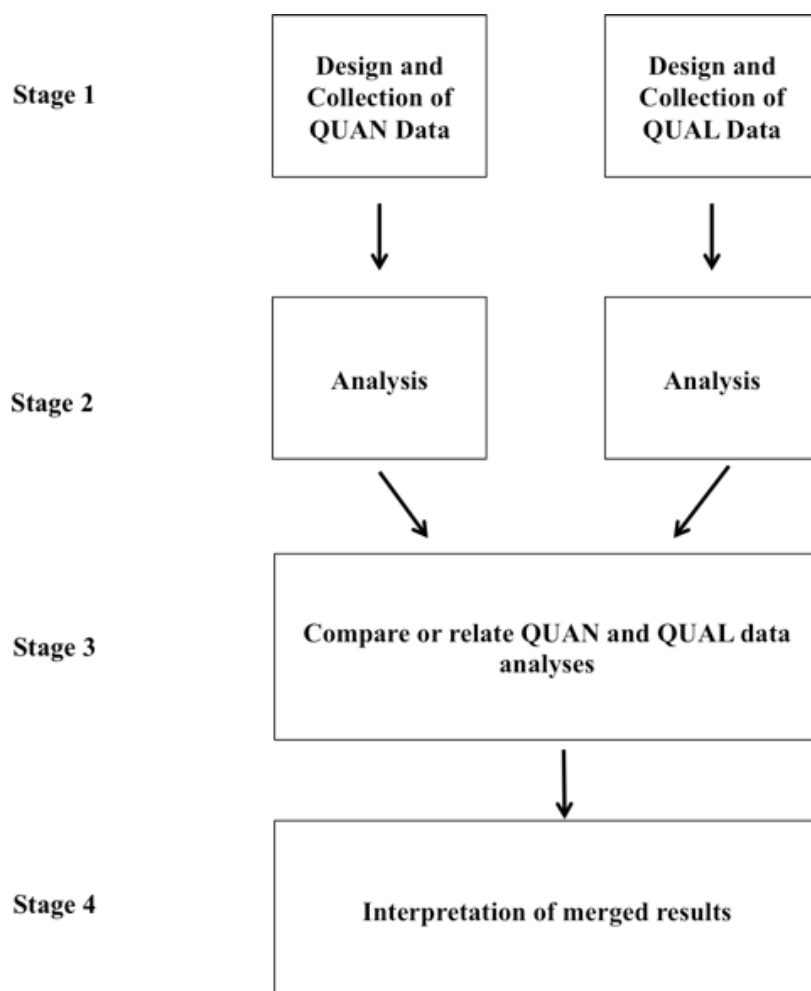
### **Design Rationale**

The central premise of mixed methods research is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, are able to provide a more thorough understanding of a given research problem than either approach alone (Creswell, 2011). Recognizing that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods may fully capture the impact of athletic or military transition, this study opted to use a mixed methods approach that would utilize the strength of both methods and offset the weaknesses of each method. Quantitative research is objective in nature and does not allow for a detailed understanding of the transition experience for athletes and veterans. Qualitative data can offset this limitation by providing a more in-depth understanding through the collection of participants' feelings and perceptions. Qualitative research is more subjective. The quantitative findings can objectively support the qualitative findings through statistical analysis and numerical representation. Additionally, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies can reduce the personal biases of the researcher (Creswell, 2011).

One common type of mixed methods design is known as the Triangulation Design. This is the most common and well-known approach to mixing methods and allows for the collection of data that is inherently different, yet complementary to the research topic (Creswell, 2011). The traditional model of a mixed methods triangulation

design is known as the convergence model, which is the mixed methods design used for this study (Figure 3.1). Within a convergent parallel design both types of data (quantitative and qualitative) are collected, separately analyzed, results from each are merged, and the researcher interprets the combined results (Creswell, 2011). Convergent parallel designs prioritize quantitative and qualitative data equally, but the datasets are kept separate until the study has reached the final stages of overall analysis and interpretations. This model is used when researchers want to compare results or to validate, confirm, or corroborate quantitative results with qualitative findings (Creswell 2011). Collecting and analyzing data in this manner provided valid and well-substantiated conclusions regarding the career transition experiences of athletes and military veterans.





*Figure 3.1.* Convergent Design Flowchart, Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Modifications were made to the original design to best address the needs of the study (Figure 3.2). The suggested modified approach in this study collected quantitative data, which also served to recruit individuals for qualitative interviews; qualitative data was collected from a subsample of individuals completing the quantitative measures. However, true to the convergent parallel design, data was independently analyzed concurrently and merged once collection and analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data was complete. The proposed study consisted of four stages to remain consistent with

the convergent parallel design presented in Figure 3.1. The first modification was made to Stage 1 of the original design framework to indicate that participants from the quantitative sample were purposively sampled for qualitative interviews. Quantitative participants were sampled for qualitative participation only on demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, sport played/branch of the military), which kept the quantitative data outcomes independent of the qualitative sampling. The remaining modifications were in Stage 2 to address two independent populations (former athletes and veterans) sampled for participation in the qualitative interviews. The modifications represent interviews being conducted separately with athletes and veterans. Stages 3 and 4 of the proposed study design remain unchanged from the original study design flowchart.

A pragmatic worldview is often associated with mixed methods research (Creswell, 2011). Pragmatism is the belief in doing what works in order to achieve the desired result. This view focuses on the consequences of research and the primary importance of the questions, rather than the methods. As such, it supports addressing certain research questions with quantitative methods and others with qualitative methods. Assumptions of pragmatism were appropriate to guide this study's merging of two separate approaches into a more comprehensive understanding of the transition experiences of former collegiate athletes and military veterans.

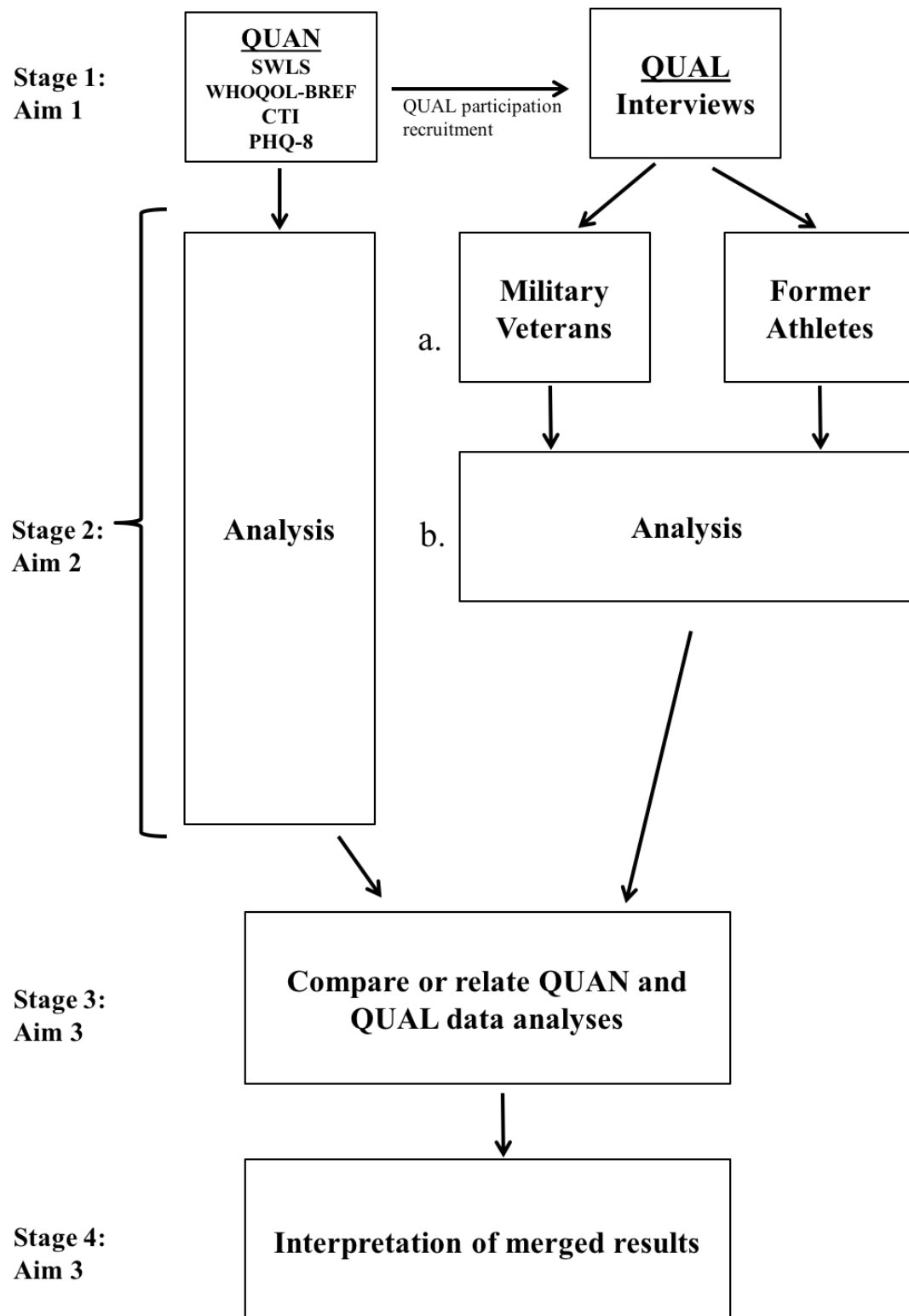


Figure 3.2. Modified Convergent Design Flowchart. Modified from Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

## **Participants**

Participants in this study consisted of former athletes and veterans. To be eligible for participation, individuals had to be 18 years or older and within two years (less than 24 months) from the time they transitioned out of their respective career. A two-year timespan was established in an attempt to avoid memory decay and recall bias, which is inherent in retrospective measures (Tourangeau, 1999). Former athletes who were actively seeking out a professional career were excluded from this study. All participants who completed the quantitative outcome measures were entered into a gift card drawing.

### **Former Athletes**

Athletic participants consisted of former collegiate athletes. These individuals were recruited by contacting approximately 2000 universities across the United States and Canada. Athletes from all sports at each university were invited to participate. To recruit these individuals, staff members within each university's athletic department were contacted (e.g., athletic director, advisors to student-athlete affairs). Executive leaders at athletic conferences within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) were contacted for recruitment assistance. Additional athletic associations (e.g., National Junior College Athletic Association, Pennsylvania Collegiate Athletic Association) and their respective conferences and schools were also contacted. Emails consisted of study information, as well as a request to acquire access to eligible individuals or simply passing study information along to either an appropriate staff member or the eligible individuals themselves (study flyer in Appendix B).

## **Military Veterans**

Individuals from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces were invited to participate in this study. Military veteran participants were recruited from veteran organizations, such as the Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of the United States and the Veterans Support Foundation. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Posts were also contacted for their assistance. In addition to these organizations, approximately 2000 university veteran service departments were contacted. The email sent to veteran contacts was identical to the email sent to athletes, with the verbiage of the email being edited to request veteran participation.

### **Quantitative Stage - Aim 1**

The first stage of the study involved the collection of quantitative data. Participants from the quantitative portion of the study were also purposively sampled for qualitative interviews. These actions addressed this study's Aim 1: Compare perceived satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition barriers and resources, and mental health of former athletes and military veterans who have transitioned or are currently transitioning out of their careers within the past 24 months.

### **Quantitative Data Collection Procedures and Measures**

The quantitative measures included in this study were combined into a single online survey link. Quantitative data were collected through the Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) web application. REDCap is a secure, web-based application designed to support data capture for research studies, providing: an intuitive interface for data entry; audit trails for tracking data and manipulation and export; and automated export procedures (Harris et al., 2009). Participants directly accessed the program for

administration of the questionnaires of this study. Prior to accessing survey questions, individuals were provided a brief description of the study, the study's eligibility requirements, and were invited to contact the primary researcher prior to engaging in the survey if they had any questions. This information served as their consent for survey participation. Basic instructions for completing the survey were also provided with each section of questions. The quantitative data collection consisted of the following measures: participant demographics, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the World Health Organization Quality of Life Scale (the abbreviated version), the Career Transition Inventory, and the Personal Health Questionnaire. The complete online survey can be found in Appendix C. A description of each measure included in the survey follows.

**Demographics.** Upon accessing the survey, individuals were asked to indicate whether they were completing the survey as a transitioning athlete or veteran. This indication branched the questions appropriately; athlete participants were asked to indicate what level of sport they competed at (i.e., collegiate or professional), what university they attended (if applicable), what sport they played, and how long they had been playing that sport. Military participants were asked to provide what branch of the military they served, what component (i.e., active duty, reserves, national guard), what military operations they had served in (e.g., Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Restore Hope), how many deployments they had served, approximately how long they had been deployed in each operation (in months), their rank, and how long they had served (in years). All participants were asked to provide their age, gender, state in which they resided, marital status, how long it had been since their career transition (in months), and their current occupation. States were grouped into the following four regions: Northeast

(CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT, NJ, NY, PA), Midwest (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI, IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD), South (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, NV, AL, KY, MS, TN, AR, LA, OK, TX), and West (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY, AL, HI, CA, OR, WA).

**Satisfaction with Life Scale.** The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a widely used scale that measures a person's subjective evaluation of his or her life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). This life satisfaction measure consists of five statements related to life satisfaction and individuals are asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Example items from this scale include statements such as "In most ways my life is close to my ideal" and "The conditions of my life are excellent." The 5 items were totaled to provide an overall life satisfaction score that could range from 5 (extremely dissatisfied) to 35 (extremely satisfied; Diener et al., 1985). A Cronbach's alpha indicated a reliability of .87 for the scale and .82 for test-retest (2-month interval). Validity of the SWLS shows moderately strong convergence with several other instruments (Diener et al., 1985).

**World Health Organization Quality of Life Measure.** The World Health Organization developed the quality of life measure that was used for this study. The WHOQOL-BREF is the abbreviated version of the WHOQOL-100 instrument comprises 26 items (WHOQOL Group, 1998). The following broad domains are represented in the items: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environmental health. The physical health domain contains items related to mobility, daily activities, functional capacity, energy, pain, and sleep. Items within the psychological domain focus on self-image, negative thoughts, positive attitudes, self-esteem, mentality, learning

ability, memory concentration, religion, and mental status. The social relationships domain is concerned with personal relationships and support and one's sex life. The environmental health domain items focus on issues related to financial resources, safety, health and social services, living physical environment, opportunities to acquire new skill and knowledge, recreation, general environment, and transportation (Nejat, Montazeri, Holakouie-Naieni, Mohammad, & Majdzadeh, 2006). The WHOQOL-BREF also contains two general questions outside of these domains: "How would you rate your quality of life?" and "How satisfied are you with your health?" Each item on the WHOQOL-BREF is scored from 1 to 5 on a response scale, which is stipulated as a five-point scale. The scores of each domain are scaled in a positive direction (i.e., lower scores denote lower quality of life). The mean score of the items of each domain is used to calculate the overall domain score, which are then transformed linearly to a scale of 0 to 100. This process was done using syntax provided by the WHO (WHOQOL Group, 1998). The WHOQOL-BREF has shown evidence of good internal consistency and strong test-retest reliability (Guay, Fortin, Fikretoglu, Poundja, & Brunet, 2015). Additionally, there is demonstrated evidence of construct, convergent, and discriminant validity.

**Career Transition Inventory.** The Career Transition Inventory (CTI) contains 40 items assessing strengths and barriers during career transition. These items were organized into five factors: readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence (Heppner, 1991). Readiness items focused on the extent to which one is task-oriented and motivated to move forward in their career transition process. The confidence items were focused on one's ability to make a successful career change. Items



within the control factor related to whether an individual perceived the career transition process as being within their control as opposed to luck, change, or powerful others. The items associated with perceived support indicate an individual's need for social support. Decision independence items indicated whether an individual viewed decisions related to the career transition as independent and autonomous (Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994). CTI items were scored from 1 to 6 on an agreement scale (strongly agree-strongly disagree). Seventeen items were reverse scored. Higher scores on the readiness factor indicate more readiness or motivation. Higher confidence factors scores indicate more confidence. Higher scores on the factor of control indicate greater feelings of personal control in the career transition process. Higher scores on the factor of perceived support indicate participants perceived greater feelings of support. Higher scores on the decision independence factor indicates the participant views their career transition decisions as independent and autonomous. Lower scores on the decision independence indicate a greater need to consider the needs and desires of others when making career transition decisions (Heppner et al., 1994). Reliability for the individual subscales ranged from .66 to .87 (median=.69). Test-retest reliability (3-week interval) reliability was reported for control (.55), readiness (.74), perceived support (.77), confidence (.79), and decision independence (.81). Overall test-retest of the CTI was reported as .84 (Heppner et al., 1994).

**Patient Health Questionnaire Depression Scale.** The Patient Health Questionnaire Depression Scale (PHQ-8) has been established as a valid diagnostic and severity measure for depressive disorders (Kroenke et al., 2008). The PHQ-8 consists of eight criteria items on which the DSM-IV diagnosis of depressive orders is based. The

ninth DSM-IV criteria item assesses suicidal or self-injurious thoughts and was excluded from the PHQ-8 because interviewers were unable to provide adequate intervention over the phone (Kroenke et al., 2008). According to research, deletion of the ninth item only has a minor effect on scoring. The PHQ-8 asks individuals to consider the last two weeks and how often they are bothered by problems, such as feeling down, depressed or hopeless or having a poor appetite or overeating. Each of item's scoring ranged from 0 (Not at all) to 3 (Nearly every day). A score on the PHQ-8  $\geq 10$  can be used for defining current depression. A score of 20 or more can be considered severe major depression.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Two sample t-tests were used to determine differences in mean scores between athlete and veteran groups (Thomas et al., 2011). This is a fitting statistical analysis to determine differences between athletes and veterans on the SWLS, WHOQOL-BREF, CTI, and the PHQ-8. Correlations were also calculated to determine relationships between outcome measures scores for athlete participants and military participants. The Fisher Z-transformation was conducted to test the significance of difference between athlete and military participant outcome correlations. This formula is a method of approximating normality of a sampling distribution of linear relationship by transforming correlation coefficients to Z values (Thomas et al., 2011). A 5% significance level was used for all tests.

In order to control for the effect of demographic characteristics on the outcomes in this study, Fishers exact and Chi-square tests were used to determine whether there was a relationship between the participant's career (athletic or military) and demographic

characteristics (i.e., age, gender, education, employment, or marital status). These characteristics were appropriately controlled for when applicable.

### **Maximum Variation Sampling**

The demographic questions in Stage 1 also served as a method of recruitment for the qualitative interviews. After completing the quantitative measures, participants indicated whether or not they would like to engage in a one-time qualitative interview, which would ask more directed questions regarding their career transition experience. Participants who indicated interest were considered for participation. From these interested individuals, a process known as maximum variation sampling took place to establish a variety of interview participants (Kuzel, 1992). Maximum variation sampling strategies are utilized to obtain the broadest range of information and perspectives. Varying of the sample prevents a one-sided representation of the topic of interest, which is the individual's career transition experience (Patton, 2002). To this end, this study interviewed participants with a variation in sport played or branch of the military served, gender, and time since career exit. This procedure is fitting for qualitative research as "many qualitative researchers employ purposive, not random, sampling methods...they seek out groups, settings and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.202). Sampling in this manner continued until saturation was reached (i.e., no new themes or properties emerged with continued sampling; Patton 2002). Due to low athlete participation, convenience sampling was used for the athlete group.

## **Qualitative Stage - Aim 2**

The second stage of the study included independent qualitative interviews, the analysis of athlete and military veteran interviews, and member reflections of the developed themes. These efforts addressed this study's Aim 2: Compare the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans.

### **Stage 2 Participants and Procedures**

Eligible athletes and military personnel who participated in Stage 1 of the study (by completing the quantitative outcome measures) and indicated an interest in engaging in a qualitative interview were recruited for interview participation. Interested individuals were recruited with intent to maximize the sample of qualitative participants based on the characteristics previously mentioned. Upon agreement and selection of an interview time, participants engaged in a single in-depth interview over the phone regarding their career transition experience. Informed consent (Appendix D) was obtained prior interview questioning and audio recording. All qualitative participants received an electronic gift card for their time and effort spent engaging in an interview.

### **Qualitative Interview Guide**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with former athletes and veterans to better understand their experience transitioning out of their respective role. An interview guide was developed to include questions that focused on the transition experience of the participant (Appendix E). The development of this study's semi-structured interview guide was informed by a similar study (Coakley, 2006), which investigated the career transition experiences of former football players. Questions were worded to be applicable to both athletic and military participants. Interview questions invited the participant to

define their transition experience, identify psychosocial factors that were influential during the transition, what resources were utilized or needed, what it meant to transition out of athletics/the military, role changes the participant had experienced, and how the participant had adapted to the transition.

Following receipt of IRB approval (approval letter in Appendix A), the interview procedure underwent a piloting with peer contacts who were either former athletes or veterans. As suggested by Creswell (2013), this process facilitated refinement of the interview questions and procedures and ensured interview questions addressed the research questions and aims. Piloting also ensured the time required to complete the interview was reasonable and that participants were able to easily understand the interview questions. It also provided an opportunity to identify interview questions that may need follow-up or additional probing to get a complete response. Finally, piloting the interview guide allowed researchers to examine whether the interview questions were truly capturing information needed to address the research questions and aims. Upon completion of the pilot interviews, individuals were prompted for suggestions to improve the guide. Any changes improving the quality of the interview process were implemented prior to actual data collection.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

The primary researcher conducted all interviews, which took place over the phone. While in-person interviews are often considered the ideal for qualitative research, studies have shown interview responses do not vary between telephone and in-person interviews (e.g., Bermack, 1989; Herzog & Rodgers, 1988). Additionally, phone interviews allowed for data to be collected from a more diverse geographical sample and

was only a portion of the data collection methods used in this mixed methods approach. At the beginning of each interview and prior to audio recording participants provided their informed consent to participate. All interviews were audio recorded using a password-protected recording device, stored on a password-protected computer, and then transcribed to assist with analysis. Upon completion of the interview, a snowballing technique was utilized for both athlete and military veteran participants in order to access other individuals who may be eligible for study participation. Interview participants received a thank you email, which included study information (e.g., study flyer and survey link) that could be forwarded to potential participants.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

MAXQDA (Version 11) was used to help organize transcripts, aid with code development, and identify patterns among coded segments. As the first transcript was read through, notes and comments were made next to statements that were interesting or seemed to have particular relevance to the purposes of this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thorough readings and note-taking allowed the researcher to recognize and filter bias, focus interpretation, and initiate coding. This approach of being open to anything is known as open coding. Notes and codes were grouped, or categorized, in a process known as axial coding (Charmaz, 2014). Categorized data helped assist the development of the main topics, or themes, of this study. The themes are the larger perspectives of the data, which provide a broad understanding of the participants' transition experiences (Creswell, 2011).

The second transcript was approached in the same manner as the first; a separate list of notes and comments were made on the transcript. Notes and comments from both

transcripts were recorded in a Word document to create a master list of concepts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Information recorded in this master list was done so without identifying information (i.e., indicating whether the participant was an athlete or military). Considering the primary researcher collected the data and conducted the analysis, it was not possible to remain completely blinded to participant identity. As such, combining all unidentified data was an attempt to partially blind the researcher to which participant made certain statements. This method afforded the researcher the opportunity to observe any emerging patterns from the data as a whole, as opposed to separating out comments based on whether the participant was a former athlete or military veteran. Participant statements were kept intact within the master document in the event the researcher needed to specify whether the participant was an athlete or veteran.

As the master list continued to develop, significant statements were identified to further establish meaning within each theme. This process of coding continued as transcripts were completed. The constant comparative method was used to continuously integrate all qualitative data into a coherent whole (Glaser, 1965). This ensured the analysis provided the most comprehensive view of the perceived transition experience of both groups. This process also allowed newly collected data to be compared with previously collected data and established codes. When new codes were needed to capture newly transcribed interviews, these new codes were applied to previous transcripts to determine relevancy. An additional and unintended consequence of the constant comparative method was the opportunity to revise interview questions eliciting repetitive responses.

## Member Reflections

The concept of member reflections has emerged in recent research as a method to replace and reframe the idea of member checking (e.g., Smith & McGannon, 2017; Tracy, 2010). Member reflections challenges other commonly used labels, such as member checks, validation, and verification (Tracy, 2010). These previously and commonly used labels have been argued to be ineffective methods of establishing validity of qualitative outcomes due to an inability to produce theory-free knowledge. As such, member checking fails to deliver objective knowledge that supports the validity of qualitative findings. The process of member reflections is considered a “practical opportunity to acknowledge and/or explore with participants the existence of contradictions and differences in knowing” (Smith & McGannon, 2017). This process is seen as an opportunity to work *with* participants and facilitate discussion between researcher(s) and participants to enrich the understanding of how the research may be further developed. Tracy (2010) explains that member reflections are less a test of research findings as they are an opportunity for collaboration and reflexive elaboration. Through the reflection process, participants can indicate whether they agree or find problems with the research.

In order to determine whether participants found the results of this research as comprehensible and meaningful (Tracy, 2010), they were asked to review the drafted themes from this study’s qualitative analysis. Participants from the qualitative stage of the study were asked to engage in a separate REDCap survey that determined a participant’s level of agreement with each theme through the use of a visual analog scale (VAS). Each theme had a VAS and the slider was initially set to the middle of the



continuum. The slider was able to be moved left (completely agree) or right (completely disagree) to indicate a participant's level of agreement. Participants were also given an opportunity to leave general comments and feedback regarding the drafted results.

### **Merging Data Stage - Aim 3**

The third stage of this study focused on merging the quantitative and qualitative data analyses to determine the relationship between the two sets of data. The fourth and final stage involved a summary and interpretation of the merged results to discuss to what extent and in what ways the results from the two types of data produce a more complete understanding of the transition experiences of both former athletes and military veterans (Creswell, 2011). These stages addressed this study's Aim 3: Determine the relationship between satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition barriers and resources, mental health, and the transition experiences between former athletes and military veterans.

### **Merging the Data**

Stage 3 of this study involved merging the quantitative and qualitative data. The use of a mixed methods data analysis provided insight into whether results from the quantitative and qualitative analysis converge and to what extent this occurred. Merged data strategies for a mixed methods study involve analytic techniques for merging results, assessing whether the results from the two databases are congruent or divergent, and, if they are divergent, analyzing the data further to reconcile the divergent findings (Creswell, 2011).

Data from this study was collected in a single phase (i.e., quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time) and both types of data were given equal emphasis. The quantitative and qualitative results were converged only during

interpretation, with the intent to draw conclusions regarding the career transition experiences of both athletes and military veterans (Creswell, 2011). Quantitative data analysis consisted of t-tests and correlations to compare and determine differences between former athletes and military veterans on the SWLS, WHOQOL-BREF, CTI, and the PHQ-8. The quantitative analysis addressed this study's Stage 1. Qualitative analysis consisted of inductive coding and theme development, which addressed this study's Stage 2. The analyses from the two datasets were then merged in this study's Stage 3 and 4 to compare overall results and establish a complete depiction of what the transition experience entailed for both participant groups.

For the purposes of this study and consistent with the convergent parallel design, the two datasets were merged and compared on the five major themes of this study (Creswell, 2011). These comparisons are represented with a side-by-side comparison analysis. This type of merging involved presenting quantitative results and qualitative findings together in a discussion or summary table in order to easily compare both types of data. One form of a side-by-side comparison is a summary table that merges the quantitative and qualitative findings, which was used for this study. Presenting the data in this format provided an easy visualization of how both sources of data, side-by-side, offer evidence for each major topic, or theme (Creswell, 2011).

#### **Interpreting the Merged Data - Stage 4**

The fourth and final stage of the study involved the interpretation of the Stage 3 combined results. In this stage, analyses were reviewed to determine convergence, divergence, contradictions, or relationships of the quantitative and qualitative data

(Creswell, 2011). The interpretation of this study elaborated on the manner in which the two datasets combined to further explain the five major themes of this study.

This chapter outlined the use of a mixed methods, convergent parallel design for this study. Participants in this study consisted of former collegiate student-athletes and military veterans who had recently transitioned out of their respective careers. Each stage of the design addressed the aims of this study. The following three chapters are independently established to address the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research question and aim. Chapters 4 and 5 provide participant information, data analysis, and findings. Chapter 6 presents the merged data and interpretations. The final chapter includes final discussion points and implications for the field of sport and exercise psychology in regard to assisting transitioning military veterans, as well as future directions for this research.

## CHAPTER IV

### STAGE 1: QUANTITATIVE STAGE

This chapter discusses data analysis findings for the first stage of this study, which is the quantitative stage. This stage also consisted of maximum variation sampling of participants from the quantitative portion of the study for qualitative interviews. These actions addressed this study's Aim 1: Compare perceived satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition barriers and resources, and mental health of former athletes and military veterans who have transitioned or are currently transitioning out of their careers within the past 24 months.

#### **Study Participants**

Data were collected from August 2017 to January 2018. Athlete participants were recruited from university athletic departments, athletic conferences (e.g., the Big Ten Conference), and retired athlete organizations (e.g., the National College Players Association, Crossing the Line: Supporting Athletes). Veterans were recruited from university veteran service departments, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) posts, and veteran organizations (e.g., Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of the United States, Veterans Support Foundation). Both former athletes and veterans were contacted through over 1200 university alumni departments. Figure 4.1 shows a breakdown of contacts made and survey access. 106 participants (42 athletes, 64 veterans) were included in the final analysis of Stage 1. Of these 106 Stage 1 participants, 24 (9 athletes, 15 veterans) participated in Stage 2 by engaging in an interview.

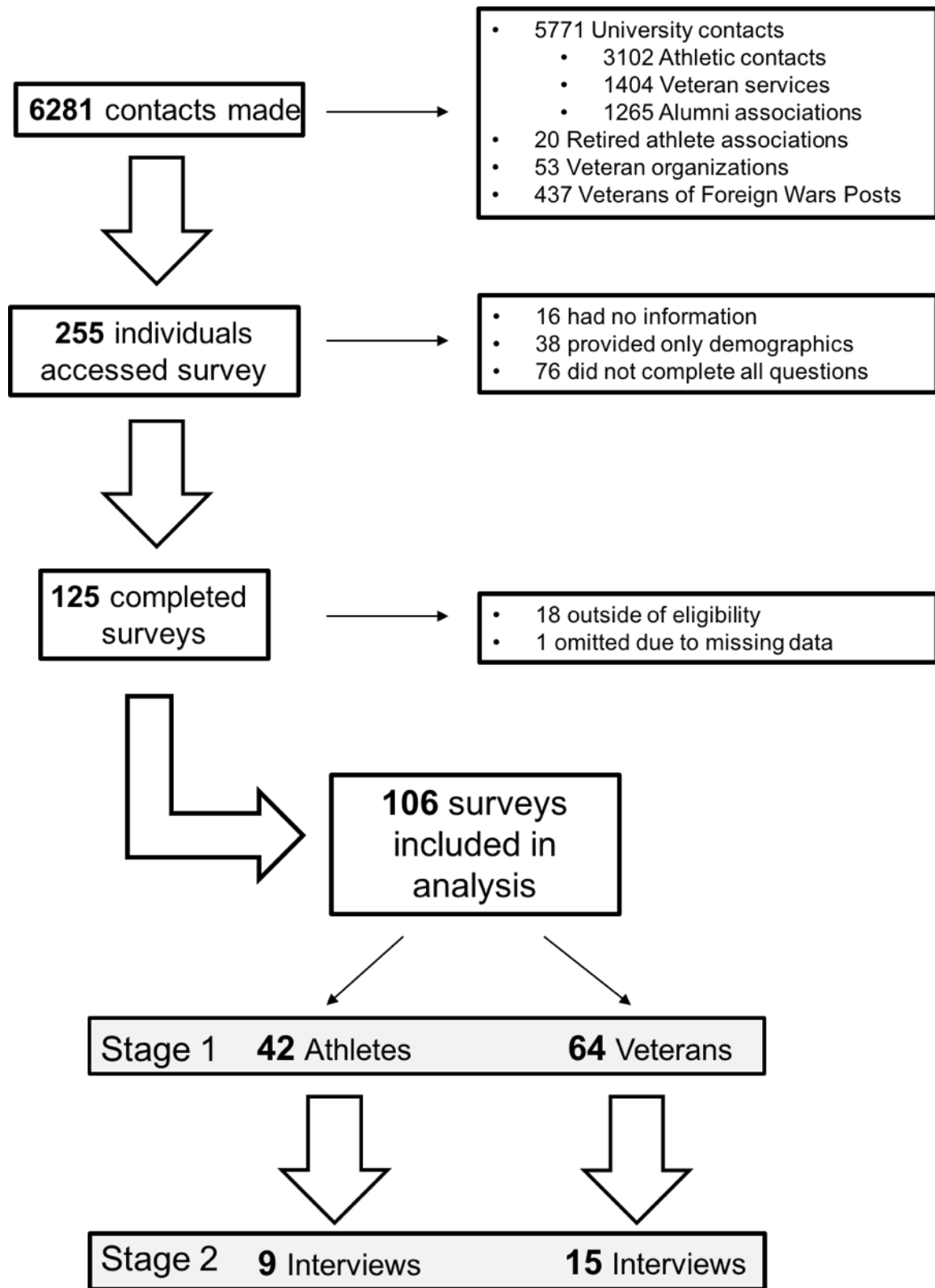


Figure 4.1. Recruitment and Participant Flowchart.

## **Quantitative Data Collection**

Potential participants were recruited primarily through email and social media. Participants accessed the survey online through a link connecting them to the survey in REDCap. The quantitative data collection for this survey consisted of the following: participant demographics, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), the World Health Organization's Quality of Life Scale (WHOQOL-BREF), the Career Transition Inventory (CTI), and the Patient Health Questionnaire Depression Scale (PHQ-8).

### **Quantitative - Stage 1 Participants**

There were 106 [42 former athletes (ATH), 64 military veterans (MIL)] eligible participants who completed the surveys in this study's Stage 1.

### **All Quantitative Participants**

Participants in Stage 1 (Table 4.1) consisted of individuals who were between the ages of 18-24 (50.9%), male (57.5%), represented the southern region of the United States (34.9%), were white (89.6%), had received a Bachelor's degree (47.2%), were employed (62.3%), and were single or had never married (54.7%).

**Table 4.1**  
Stage 1 Quantitative Participant Characteristics

TOTAL (N=106)			Athletes (n=42)		Military (n=64)	
Descriptor	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age <sup>1,a</sup>						
18-24	54	50.9	40	95.2	14	21.9
25-34	32	30.2	1	2.4	31	48.4
35-44	13	12.3	-	-	13	20.3
45-54	4	3.8	-	-	4	6.3
55-64	1	0.9	-	-	1	1.6
Gender <sup>a</sup>						
Male	61	57.5	15	35.7	46	71.9
Female	45	42.5	27	64.3	18	28.1
Region						
Northeast	17	16.0	4	9.5	13	20.3
Midwest	32	30.2	15	35.7	17	26.6
South	37	34.9	16	38.1	21	32.8
West	19	17.9	6	14.3	13	20.3
Outside US	1	0.9	1	2.4	-	-
Ethnicity <sup>2</sup>						
White	95	89.6	41	97.6	54	84.4
Hispanic or Latino	9	8.5	1	2.4	8	12.5
Black or African American	6	5.7	1	2.4	5	7.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	2.8	-	-	3	4.7
Other	2	1.9	-	-	2	3.1
Education						
High school graduate, diploma, or equivalent	4	3.8	-	-	4	6.3
Some college credit	25	23.6	4	9.5	21	32.8
Trade/technical/vocational training	3	2.8	-	-	3	4.7
Associate degree	11	10.4	-	-	11	17.2
Bachelor's degree	50	47.2	36	85.7	14	21.9
Master's degree	12	11.3	2	4.8	10	15.6
Professional degree	1	0.9	-	-	1	1.6
Employment <sup>b</sup>						
Employed	66	62.3	33	78.6	33	51.6
Out of work and looking	16	15.1	6	14.3	10	15.6
Out of work but not currently looking	17	16.0	3	7.1	14	21.9
Retired	6	5.7	-	-	6	9.4
Unable to work	1	0.9	-	-	1	1.6
Marital Status <sup>a</sup>						
Single (never married)	58	54.7	39	92.9	19	29.7
Married	38	35.8	3	7.1	35	54.7
Separated	1	0.9	-	-	1	1.6
Divorced	9	8.5	-	-	9	14.1

<sup>1</sup>Missing data, n=2

<sup>2</sup>Participant(s) indicated more than one selection

Note: Demographic characteristics of age, education, employment, and marital status were collapsed into two groups for Fishers Exact or Chi-square analyses. Significant results indicate a difference in the characteristic distribution between athlete and military participants.

<sup>a</sup>p<.001, <sup>b</sup>p<.01

## Quantitative Stage Athlete Participants

Forty-two former athletes participated in Stage 1 (see Table 4.1). Participants were between ages of 18-24 (95.2%), female (64.3%), represented the southern region of the United States (38.1%), were white (97.6%), had received a Bachelor's degree (85.7%), were employed (78.6%), and were single or never married (92.9%). Regarding athletic characteristics (Table 4.2), there was a mix of individual and team sports represented. Cross country had the highest percentage represented in this sample (14.3%). Participants had played an average of 8.5 years ( $SD=5.3$ ) in their selected sport. The majority had attended an NCAA Division I school (52.4%). The average time since participants had transitioned out of their athletic career was 7.0 months ( $SD=5.4$ ).

**Table 4.2**  
Stage 1 Quantitative Athletic Descriptors (n=42)

Descriptor	N	%/Range
Sport		
Baseball	4	9.5
Basketball	3	7.1
Bowling	1	2.4
Cross Country	6	14.3
Football	3	7.1
Golf	2	4.8
Lacrosse	3	7.1
Rowing	1	2.4
Soccer	1	2.4
Softball	3	7.1
Swimming & Diving	4	9.5
Tennis	2	4.8
Track & Field	4	9.5
Volleyball	5	11.9
Years in selected sport (mean)	8.5	2-19
University type attended		
NCAA Division I	22	52.4
NCAA Division II	3	7.1
NCAA Division III	7	16.7
NAIA	10	23.8
Months since transition out (mean)	6.7	1-20



### **Quantitative Stage Military Participants**

Sixty-four veterans participated in Stage 1 (Table 4.1). Participants were between ages 25-34 (48.4%), male (71.9%), represented the southern region of the United States (32.8%), were white (84.4%), had earned some college credit (32.8%), were employed (51.6%), and were married (54.7%). Regarding their military characteristics (Table 4.3), the majority of participants had served active duty (84.4%). The Army was the most represented branch of the military (37.5%) and most participants indicated either an E4 (i.e., corporal, specialist) or E5 (i.e., sergeant) pay grade (53.1% combined). Military participants indicated an average of nearly 2 deployments ( $M=1.6$ ,  $SD=1.5$ ) and most listed several military operations they had been a part of, with Operation Enduring Freedom being the most frequently listed (43.8%). Deployments averaged approximately 8 months ( $M=8.1$ ,  $SD=6.0$ ). Participants served an average of 9.5 years ( $SD=7.3$ ) in the military. The average time since participants had transitioned out of their military career was 9.0 months ( $SD=6.7$ ).

**Table 4.3**

Stage 1 Quantitative Military Descriptors (n=64)

Descriptor	N	%	Descriptor	N	%/Range
<i>Branch of Service/Pay Grade (% per branch)</i>			Component		
Air Force	11	17.2	Active Duty	54	84.4
E4	4	36.4	Reserves	2	3.1
E5	3	27.3	National Guard	1	1.6
E6	1	9.1	Does not apply	-	-
E7	1	9.1	Both Actives and Reserves	6	9.4
03	2	18.2	Military Operations <sup>2</sup>		
Army	24	37.5	Operation Desert Storm	2	3.1
E4	6	25.0	Operation Enduring Freedom	28	43.1
E5	6	25.0	Operation Iraqi Freedom	20	30.8
E6	1	4.2	Operation New Dawn	5	7.7
E7	2	8.3	Operation Inherent Resolve	3	4.6
W1	1	4.2	Classified	1	1.5
01	1	4.2	Other	25	39.1
03	4	16.7	None	16	24.6
04	2	8.3	Number of deployments (mean)	1.6	1-6
06	1	4.2	Approximate deployment length in months (mean)	8.1	2-28
Coast Guard	1	1.6	Total number of years served (mean)	9.5	3-30
E7	1	100	Months since transition out (mean)	9.0	0-24
Marine Corps <sup>1</sup>	16	25.0			
E3	2	12.5			
E4	4	25.0			
E5	2	12.5			
E6	1	6.3			
03	5	31.3			
05	1	6.3			
Navy	12	18.8			
E4	3	25.0			
E5	8	66.7			
03	1	8.3			

<sup>1</sup>Missing data n=1<sup>2</sup>Participants indicated more than one operation served

## Quantitative Data Analysis

### Fishers exact test and Chi-square

The Fishers exact tests and Chi-square analysis were used to test whether there was an association between the participant's career (athletic or military) and demographic characteristics of age, gender, education, employment, or marital status. In order to conduct these analyses, the sub-categories of each demographic characteristic (presented in Table 4.1) were collapsed into two categories. This is a technique recommended when

several cells have frequencies less than 5 (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2011).

Demographics were collapsed in the following ways; age was categorized as 1) under 24 years old and 2) 25 years or older; education was categorized as 1) high school, some college credit, trade/technical/vocational training, or Associates degree and 2) Bachelor's, Masters, or Professional degree; employment was categorized as 1) employed and 2) not employed; and marital status was categorized as 1) married and 2) single, divorced, or separated. The relationship that age, education, employment, or marital status had with career type were evaluated with the Fishers exact test.

The two-sided Fishers exact tests revealed significant relationships between career type and age ( $p < .001$ ), employment ( $p < .01$ ), and marital status ( $p < .001$ ).

Significant results indicated the distribution of the specific demographic characteristic differed between athletes and veterans. Gender did not have to be re-categorized considering all participants were represented in the two categories of male and female. A Chi-square was appropriate to determine the distribution of gender among athlete and veteran participants considering each cell had a frequency greater than 5. Results of the chi-square indicated a significant relationship between gender and career type,  $X^2 (1, N = 106) = 13.57, p < .001$ . This result indicated gender was not evenly distributed among athlete and military participants. Athlete participants were more likely to be female and military participants were more likely to be male.

The purpose of the Fishers exact test and the Chi-square was to determine whether there were significant differences between the populations being tested (Thomas et al., 2011). A significant Chi-square or Fishers exact test indicated a difference between athlete and military participants in the distribution of the demographic characteristic

being measured. Results from the Chi-square and Fishers exact tests indicated the demographic characteristics of age, gender, employment, and marital status may impact the outcome measure scores collected in this study. Therefore, it was necessary to account for these factors in the comparison analyses of variance.

### **Factorial ANOVAs**

Further analyses were needed considering Chi-square and Fishers exact tests revealed significant relationships between several demographic characteristics and whether a participant was an athlete or military veteran. Factorial ANOVAs were conducted in order to account for the influence the demographic characteristics of age, gender, employment, and marital status may have had on the outcome measure scores. Appendix F contains the calculated F-values for the interactions. Of particular interest in the factorial ANOVA results was the interaction between career type and the demographic characteristics being tested. If there was a significant interaction, this indicated the type of career was dependent upon the demographic characteristic being examined.

When there was not a significant interaction in the ANOVA analyses, two sample t-tests were used to compare and determine differences between former athletes and military veterans on the quantitative outcome measures in this study: the SWLS, WHOQOL-BREF, CTI, and the PHQ-8. Correlations were also calculated to determine relationships between outcome measures scores for athlete participants and military participants. The Fisher Z-transformation was conducted to test the significance of difference between athlete and military participant outcome correlations. Two-tailed

analyses with  $\alpha = 0.05$  were performed with IBM SPSS Statistics (v24; SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL).

## Quantitative Findings

### Satisfaction with Life Scale

Participants ( $N=104$ ; ATH=40, MIL=64) scored an average of 26.85 ( $SD=6.02$ ) on the SWLS. Overall, most participants scored within the “satisfied” (35.6%) category. See Table 4.4 for results. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and life satisfaction scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean life satisfaction scores between athlete and military participants. There was no statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=27.33$ ,  $SD=5.81$ ) and military participants ( $M=26.55$ ,  $SD=6.18$ ), in regard to overall scores on the Satisfaction with Life Scale,  $t(102)=.639$ ,  $p=.524$ ,  $CI_{.95}$  -1.64, 3.20. This was supported by a Cohen’s effect size value ( $d=0.14$ ) suggesting low practical significance.

**Table 4.4**  
Stage 1 Satisfaction with Life Scores ( $N=104$ )

			<b>Athletes<sup>1</sup></b> <i>M(SD)</i>		<b>Military</b> <i>M(SD)</i>		<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>SWLS</b>			27.3(5.8)		26.5(6.2)		.639	.534
<i>Categories</i>	N	%	n=40	%	n=64	%		
Extremely Satisfied	30	28.8	13	32.5	17	26.6		
Satisfied	37	35.6	13	32.5	24	37.5		
Slightly Satisfied	19	18.3	10	25.0	9	14.1		
Neutral	4	3.8	0	-	4	6.3		
Slightly Dissatisfied	11	10.6	4	10.0	7	11.0		
Dissatisfied	1	1.0	1	2.5	0	-		
Extremely Dissatisfied	2	1.9	0	-	2	31.3		

<sup>1</sup>Missing data from 2 participants

### **World Health Organization Quality of Life, abbreviated measure**

The WHOQOL-BREF measures four domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment health. Results are presented in Table 4.5. Missing data for 3 items for 3 participants (i.e., 1 item per participant) were substituted with an average from other items within the same domain (WHOQOL Group, 1998). There were 106 participants included in the WHOQOL-BREF analysis ( $N=106$ ; ATH=42, MIL=64).

**General Questions.** The WHOQOL-BREF includes two general questions asking participants to indicate how they would rate their quality of life and their level of satisfaction with their health. For the quality of life rating, 91.5% of participants indicated a “very good” or “good” rating. In regard to satisfaction with health, 74.5% of participants indicated they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied.”

**Physical Health.** Within the physical health domain, participants had an average score of 74.36 ( $SD=18.61$ ). Scores ranged from 17.86 to 100. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and physical health scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean physical health scores between athlete and military participants. There was a statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=80.27$ ,  $SD=15.10$ ) and military participants ( $M=70.48$ ,  $SD=19.75$ ),  $t(104)=2.731$ ,  $p=.007$ ,  $CI_{.95}$  2.68, 16.90. This indicates athlete participants had more energy and were more satisfied with their ability to perform daily living activities, capacity to work, and sleep. Cohen’s effect size value ( $d=0.56$ ) suggested moderate practical significance.

**Psychological Health.** Regarding the psychological health domain, participants had an average score of 67.1 ( $SD=19.0$ ). Scores ranged from 4.17-100. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and psychological health scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean psychological health scores between athlete and military participants. There was no statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=67.66$ ,  $SD=17.63$ ) and military participants ( $M=66.73$ ,  $SD=19.98$ ),  $t(104)=-.245$ ,  $p=.807$ ,  $CI_{.95}$  -6.59, 8.44. Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.05$ ) suggested low practical significance.

**Social Relationships.** Participants had an average score of 68.32 ( $SD=25.16$ ) on the social relationships domain. Scores ranged from 0-100. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and social relationship scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean social relationship scores between athlete and military participants. There was no statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=73.21$ ,  $SD=21.19$ ) and military participants ( $M=65.10$ ,  $SD=27.13$ ), on the social relationships domain,  $t(104)=1.636$ ,  $p=.105$ ,  $CI_{.95}$  -1.72, 17.94. Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.33$ ) suggested small practical significance.

**Environment.** Within the environment domain, participants had an average score of 70.31 ( $SD=16.57$ ). Scores ranged from 21.88-100. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and environment scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean environment scores between athlete and military participants. There was a statistically

significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=74.55$ ,  $SD=14.60$ ) and military participants ( $M=67.53$ ,  $SD=17.29$ ), within the environment domain,  $t(104)=2.172$ ,  $p=.032$ ,  $CI_{.95}$  .61, 13.43. This indicates athlete participants were more satisfied with their financial stability, access to healthcare services, the conditions of their living space, etc. Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.44$ ) suggested small-to-moderate practical significance.

**Table 4.5**

Stage 1 World Health Organization Quality of Life Scores (N=106)

WHOQOL Domains	Athletes M(SD)	Military M(SD)	t	p
Physical Health	80.3(15.1)	70.5(19.7)	2.731	.007**
Psychological Health	67.7(17.6)	66.7(20.0)	.245	.807
Social Relationships	73.2(21.2)	65.1(27.1)	1.636	.105
Environment	74.6(14.6)	67.5(17.3)	2.172	.032*

\*\* $p<.01$ , \* $p<.05$

### The Career Transition Inventory

Results for the five factors of the CTI are depicted in Table 4.6. Missing data were substituted with an average from other items within the same domain. One participant record was discarded due to 50% missing data. There were 105 participants included in the CTI analysis ( $N=105$ ; ATH=42, MIL=63).

**Control.** Within the factor of control, participants had an average score of 22.04 ( $SD=5.31$ ). Scores ranged from 6-35. ANOVA analyses indicated a significant interaction between marital status and career type on transition control scores,  $F(1,101) = 4.14$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $\eta_p^2=0.039$ . This interaction indicated military participants, overall, scored higher on the factor of control. Married military participants scored the highest. However, the cell sizes were not balanced; only three athlete participants were married, whereas 34 military participants were married. Additionally,  $\eta_p^2=0.039$  indicated only 4% of the total variability in the control score was captured in this interaction.



Given these factors, which can influence the interpretation of the interaction, it is appropriate to use independent t-tests to determine a difference in mean transition control scores between athlete and military participants. There was a statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=20.55$ ,  $SD=5.19$ ) and military participants [ $(M=23.03$ ,  $SD=5.2)$ ,  $t(103)= -2.399$ ,  $p=.018$ ,  $CI_{95} -4.54, -.43$ ], indicating military participants more likely perceived their transition of being within their control, as opposed to luck, change, or powerful others. Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.48$ ) suggested small-to-moderate practical significance.

**Readiness.** Participants had an average score of 60.32 ( $SD=7.93$ ) on the readiness factor. Scores ranged from 38-75. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and transition readiness scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean transition readiness scores between athlete and military participants. There was no statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=60.07$ ,  $SD=7.20$ ) and military participants ( $M=60.49$ ,  $SD=8.43$ ),  $t(103)=-.265$ ,  $p=.791$ ,  $CI_{95} -3.57, 2.73$ . Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.05$ ) suggested low practical significance.

**Perceived Support.** Regarding the factor of perceived support, participants' average score was 24.71 ( $SD=4.31$ ). Scores ranged from 12-30. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and perceived support scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean perceived support scores between athlete and military participants. There was no statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=24.95$ ,

$SD=4.37$ ) and military participants ( $M=24.56$ ,  $SD=4.31$ ),  $t(103)=.460$ ,  $p=.646$ ,  $CI_{.95} -1.31$ , 2.12. Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.09$ ) suggested low practical significance.

**Confidence.** Within the factor of confidence, participants had an overall score of 45.28 ( $SD=8.81$ ). Scores ranged from 16-61. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and confidence scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean confidence scores between athlete and military participants. There was no statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=45.17$ ,  $SD=9.39$ ) and military participants ( $M=45.35$ ,  $SD=8.48$ ),  $t(103)= -.104$ ,  $p=.918$ ,  $CI_{.95} -3.68$ , 3.31. Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.02$ ) suggested low practical significance.

**Decision Independence.** Within the factor of decision independence, participants had an overall score of 18.28 ( $SD=4.73$ ). Scores ranged from 8-30. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant interaction between demographic characteristics and decision independence scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean decision independence scores between athlete and military participants. There was no statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=19.29$ ,  $SD=4.13$ ) and military participants ( $M=17.6$ ,  $SD=5.01$ ),  $t(103)=1.804$ ,  $p=.074$ ,  $CI_{.95} -.17$ , 3.53. Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.37$ ) suggested small practical significance.

**Table 4.6**

Stage 1 Career Transition Inventory Scores (N=105)

<b>CTI Factors</b>	<b>Athletes M (SD)</b>	<b>Military M (SD)</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
Control	20.6(5.2)	23.0(5.2)	-2.399	.018*
Readiness	60.1(7.2)	60.5(8.4)	-.265	.791
Perceived Support	25.0(4.4)	24.6(4.3)	.460	.646
Confidence	45.2(9.4)	45.4(8.5)	-.104	.918
Decision Independence	19.3(4.1)	17.6(5.0)	1.804	.074

\*p&lt;.05

**Patient Health Questionnaire Depression Scale**

Participants ( $N=104$ ; ATH=42, MIL=62) had an average score of 5.82 ( $SD=5.65$ ) on the PHQ-8. Scores ranged from 0-23. Results are presented in Table 4.7. ANOVA analyses did not indicate a significant relationship between demographic characteristics and depression scores (Appendix F). Independent t-tests were calculated to determine a difference in mean depression scores between athlete and military participants. There was no statistically significant difference between athlete participants ( $M=5.09$ ,  $SD=4.67$ ) and military participants ( $M=6.40$ ,  $SD=6.20$ ),  $t(102)=-1.162$ ,  $p=.248$ ,  $CI_{.95}$  -3.54, .93. Cohen's effect size value ( $d=0.24$ ) suggested a small practical significance. Majority of participants' scores indicated 'no major depression' (76.9%).

**Table 4.7**

Stage 1 Patient Health Questionnaire Scores (N=104)

<b>PHQ-8</b>			<b>Athletes M (SD)</b>		<b>Military<sup>1</sup> M (SD)</b>		<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
			5.1 (4.7)		6.4 (6.2)		-1.162	.248
<i>Categories</i>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n=42</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n=62</b>	<b>%</b>		
No major depression	80	76.9	35	83.3	45	72.6		
Major Depression	21	20.2	7	16.7	14	22.6		
Severe Major Depression	3	2.9	0	-	3	4.8		

<sup>1</sup>Missing data from 2 participants

## **Correlations**

Correlational analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the outcome scores for both participant groups. Analysis indicated a number of significant correlations between outcome measure scores. The results of these correlations for athlete and military participants are shown in Tables 4.8 and 4.9, respectively.

**Table 4.8**  
Stage 1 Outcome Correlations for Athlete Participants

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. SWLS	-	-.564**	.506**	.708**	.511**	.489**	.399*	.066	-.097	.126	.141
2. PHQ-8		-	-.783**	-.711**	-.541**	-.436**	-.132	-.252	-.142	-.281	-.296
3. Physical Health			-	.733**	.564**	.484**	.095	.064	-.073	.144	.122
4. Psychological Health				-	.682**	.674**	.284	.280	.098	.248	.262
5. Social Relationships					-	.622**	.160	.067	.030	.095	.062
6. Environment						-	.179	.148	.016	.046	.269
7. Readiness							-	.087	-.137	.210	.326*
8. Confidence								-	.709**	.806**	.522**
9. Control									-	.418**	.372*
10. Perceived Support										-	.459**
11. Decision Independence											-

\*\*Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed); \*Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Table 4.9**  
Stage 1 Outcome Correlations for Military Participants

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. SWLS	-	-.472**	.581**	.621**	.616**	.629**	.338**	.488**	.205	.618**	-.048
2. PHQ-8		-	-.741**	-.709**	-.421**	-.604**	-.189	-.500**	-.302*	-.448**	-.070
3. Physical Health			-	.659**	.460**	.659**	.317*	.568**	.213	.546**	.153
4. Psychological Health				-	.652**	.735**	.458**	.506**	.239	.586**	.013
5. Social Relationships					-	.641**	.245	.353**	.146	.571**	-.003
6. Environment						-	.455**	.567**	.419**	.706**	.104
7. Readiness							-	.452**	.142	.580**	.272*
8. Confidence								-	.564**	.697**	.376**
9. Control									-	.431**	.228
10. Perceived Support										-	.205
11. Decision Independence											-

\*\*Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed); \*Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Significant Correlations for Both Participant Groups.** There were 23 significant correlations for athletes and 40 significant correlations for military veterans. Life satisfaction scores, depression scores, and all quality of life domains, correlated. Life satisfaction scores positively correlated to the CTI factor of readiness. Readiness positively correlated to decision independence. The CTI factor of confidence positively correlated to other CTI factors of control, perceived support, and decision independence. The CTI factors of control and perceived support also positively correlated.

**Correlation Comparisons.** The Fisher-Z transformation was conducted to test the significance of the difference between athlete and military participant outcome correlations. Using this technique, there were significant differences between correlations for 9 of the 55 comparisons conducted (i.e., 16% of correlations for outcomes for athletes and military participants were significantly different from one another). Majority of the correlations where athlete and military participants presented significant differences included the CTI factors of perceived support and confidence and the WHOQOL domains of environment and physical health. An overview of the correlation comparisons that presents significant differences can be found in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.10**

Stage 1 Fishers Z Transformation Results

Correlation	ATH		MIL		Z-score
	r	N	r	N	
SWLS/CTI-Confidence	.066	40	.488**	63	2.24*
QOL-Physical/CTI-Confidence	.064	42	.568**	63	2.82**
QOL-Physical/CTI-Perceived Support	.144	42	.546**	63	2.27*
QOL-Psychological/CTI-Perceived Support	.248	42	.586**	63	2.03*
QOL-Social Relationships/CTI-Perceived Support	.095	41	.571**	62	2.66**
QOL-Environment/CTI-Confidence	.148	42	.567**	62	2.39*
QOL-Environment/CTI-Control	.016	42	.419**	62	2.09*
QOL-Environment/CTI-Perceived Support	.046	42	.706**	62	4.04**
CTI-Readiness/CTI-Perceived Support	.210	42	.580**	63	2.18*

\*\*p&lt;.01, \*p&lt;.05

### Maximum Variation Sampling

One of the modifications made to the convergent parallel design flowchart was sampling from participants in the quantitative stage for the qualitative stage. Participants for Stage 2 of the study (qualitative interviews) were recruited from Stage 1 participants who indicated an interest in engaging in an interview on the REDCap survey; at the conclusion of the outcome measures portion of the survey, participants were asked if they would be interested in engaging in an interview that would focus on their transition experience.

### Qualitative Stage Participants

Stage 2 participants consisted of individuals who were 18-24 years old (50%), male (62.5%), lived in the southern and Midwest regions of the United States (37.5% each), were white (95.8%), had received a Bachelor's degree (45.8%), were employed (70.8%), and were single or had never been married (58.3%). Table 4.11 provides an overview of the demographics from all Stage 2 participants.

**Table 4.11**  
Stage 2 Qualitative Participant Characteristics

TOTAL (N=24)			Athletes (n=9)		Military (n=15)	
Descriptor	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age <sup>a</sup>						
18-24	12	50.0	8	88.9	4	26.7
25-34	9	37.5	1	11.1	8	53.5
35-44	1	4.2	-	-	1	6.7
45-54	1	4.2	-	-	1	6.7
Gender						
Male	15	62.5	4	44.4	11	73.3
Female	9	37.5	5	55.6	4	26.7
Region						
Northeast	3	12.5	-	-	4	26.7
Midwest	9	37.5	6	66.7	3	20
South	9	37.5	2	22.2	7	46.7
West	2	8.3	1	11.1	1	6.7
Ethnicity <sup>1</sup>						
White	23	95.8	9	100	14	93.3
Hispanic or Latino	2	8.3	1	11.1	1	6.7
Black or African American	1	4.2	-	-	1	6.7
Education <sup>a</sup>						
High school graduate, diploma, or equivalent	2	8.3	-	-	2	13.3
Some college credit	5	20.8	1	11.1	4	26.7
Associate degree	4	16.7	-	-	4	26.7
Bachelor's degree	11	45.8	7	77.8	4	26.7
Master's degree	2	8.3	1	11.1	1	6.7
Employment <sup>a</sup>						
Employed	17	70.8	9	100	8	53.5
Out of work and looking	2	8.3	-	-	2	13.3
Out of work but not currently looking	4	16.7	-	-	4	26.7
Retired	1	4.2	-	-	1	6.7
Marital Status <sup>a</sup>						
Single (never married)	14	58.3	9	100	5	33.3
Married	7	29.2	-	-	7	46.7
Divorced	3	12.5	-	-	3	20

<sup>1</sup>Participant(s) indicated more than one selection

Note: Demographic characteristics of age, education, employment, and marital status were collapsed into two groups for Fishers Exact or Chi-square analyses. Significant results indicate a difference in the characteristic distribution among athlete and military participants.

<sup>a</sup>p<.05



## Qualitative Stage Athlete Participants

Nine former athletes participated in Stage 2, the qualitative stage (Table 4.11). Participants were between the ages of 18-24 (88.9%), female (55.6%), lived in Midwestern states (66.7%), were white (100%), had earned a Bachelor's degree (77.8%), were employed (100%), and were single or never married (100%). Former athletes had been involved in their sport for an average of 9.3 years. The majority of participants had attended an NCAA Division I school (66.7%). Lacrosse was the most represented sport among Stage 2 participants (33.3%). The average time since participants had transitioned from their respective sport was 5.3 months ( $SD=5.07$ ). Table 4.12 provides an overview of the demographics of Stage 2 athlete participants. Table 4.13 provides an overview of the results from Stage 1 outcome measures for Stage 2 athlete participants. Outcome measure scores between Stage 1 quantitative participants and Stage 2 qualitative participants were comparable.

**Table 4.12**

Stage 2 Qualitative Athletic Descriptors (n=9)

Descriptor	N	%/Range
Sport		
Cross Country	2	22.2
Golf	1	11.1
Lacrosse	3	33.3
Softball	1	11.1
Swimming & Diving	1	11.1
Track & Field	1	11.1
Years in selected sport (mean)	9.3	2-18
University type attended		
NCAA Division I	6	66.7
NCAA Division III	2	22.2
NAIA	1	11.1
Months since transition out (mean)	5.3	1.5-16

**Table 4.13****Stage 1 Outcome Measure Scores for Stage 2 Qualitative Participants**

	Total (N=24)		Athletes (n=9)		Military (n=15)	
Measure	Mean(SD)		Mean(SD)		Mean(SD)	
SWLS <sup>1</sup>	27.4(4.8)		27.9(4.8)		27.1(4.9)	
<i>Categories</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Extremely Satisfied	6	25	2	22.2	4	26.7
Satisfied	8	33.3	3	33.3	5	33.3
Slightly Satisfied	5	20.8	2	22.2	3	20
Neutral	3	12.5	-	-	3	20
Slightly Dissatisfied	1	4.2	1	11.1	-	-
	Mean(SD)		Mean(SD)		Mean(SD)	
PHQ-8	5.9(5.8)		4.1(4.3)		6.9(6.4)	
<i>Categories</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
No major depression	17	70.8	7	77.8	10	66.7
Major Depression	6	25	2	22.2	4	26.7
Severe Major Depression	1	4.2	-	-	1	6.7
WHOQOL Domains	Mean(SD)	Range	Mean(SD)	Range	Mean(SD)	Range
Physical Health	75.7(15.9)	46.4-100	81.7(14.6)	60.7-100	72.1(16.1)	46.4-100
Psychological Health	66.5(19.7)	16.7-100	62.9(20.7)	16.7-83.3	68.6(19.5)	33.3-100
Social Relationships <sup>1</sup>	69.6(23.2)	16.7-100	66.7(20.9)	25-91.7	71.1(25.0)	16.7-100
Environment	72(13.7)	34.4-96.9	71.9(12.3)	46.9-84.4	72.1(14.8)	34.4-96.9
CTI Factors	Mean(SD)	Range	Mean(SD)	Range	Mean(SD)	Range
Control	23.1(5.0)	12-35	23.1(4.0)	18-30	23.1(5.6)	12-35
Readiness	61.6(8.4)	41-75	58.9(10.2)	41-71	63.3(7.0)	53-75
Perceived Support <sup>1</sup>	25.8(4.2)	12-30	24.7(5.3)	12-30	26.4(3.4)	19-30
Confidence	44.9(8.4)	27-58	46.2(9.4)	33-58	44.1(8.0)	27-56
Decision Independence	17.6(5.3)	8-30	18.1(4.3)	11-23	17.3(5.9)	8-30

<sup>1</sup>Missing data n=1**Qualitative Stage Military Participants**

Fifteen veterans participated in Stage 2 (Table 4.11). Participants ranged between the ages of 25-34 (53.3%), were male (73.3%), represented the southern region of the United States (46.7%), were white (93.3%), had received some college credit/Associate's degree/ Bachelor's degree (each 26.7%), were employed (53.5%), and married (46.7%). Regarding their military characteristics (Table 4.14), the Army was the most represented branch (33.3%) and most participants were active duty (93.3%). The E5 pay grade was the most represented in the sample (46.7%). Of the 15 Stage 2 military participants, 11 had served a deployment. Those who had deployed averaged nearly 2 deployments

( $M=1.8$ ) and deployment length averaged 10 months ( $SD=8.36$ ). Participants served an average of 9.4 years. The average time since participants had transitioned out of their military career was 8.3 ( $SD=6.36$ ) months. Table 4.14 provides an overview of the demographics of Stage 2 military participants. Table 4.13 provides an overview of the results from Stage 1 outcome measures for Stage 2 military participants.

**Table 4.14**  
Stage 2 Qualitative Military Descriptors (n=15)

Descriptor	N	%/Range
<i>Branch of Service/Pay Grade (% per branch)</i>		
Air Force	3	20
E5	1	33.3
E6	1	33.3
03	1	33.3
Army	5	33.3
E4	2	40
E5	2	40
06	1	20
Coast Guard	1	6.7
E7	1	100
Marine Corps	16	25
E5	2	66.6
03	1	33.3
Navy	3	20
E4	1	33.3
E5	2	66.6
<b>Component</b>		
Active Duty	14	93.3
Both Actives and Reserves	1	6.7
<b>Military Operations<sup>1</sup></b>		
Operation Desert Storm	1	6.7
Operation Enduring Freedom	8	53.5
Operation Iraqi Freedom	5	33.3
Operation New Dawn	2	13.3
Operation Inherent Resolve	2	13.3
Classified	1	6.7
Other	2	13.3
None	4	26.7
Number of deployments (mean)	11	73.3
Approximate deployment length in months (mean)	1.8	1-5
Total number of years served (mean)	10	5-28
Months since transition out (mean)	9.4	3-30

<sup>1</sup>Participants indicated more than one selection

## **Quantitative Stage Summary**

Stage 1 consisted of 106 participants. Satisfaction with life scores were not statistically significant between athlete and military participants. Overall participants scored within the ‘satisfied’ category on the SWLS. There was a statistically significant difference on the WHOQOL-BREF domain scores for physical health and environment, for which athlete participants scored higher. There was no significant difference on the other domains (psychological health and social relationships). With regard to the Career Transition Inventory, athlete and military participants only differed on the factor of control, where military had a significantly higher mean. There was no statistically significant difference between the participant groups on depression (PHQ-8) scores. Most participants scored in the “no major depression” category on the PHQ-8. Correlations were calculated for outcome measure items and domain scores. The Fishers Z Transformation indicated a significant difference between correlations for 9 of the 55 comparisons conducted (16.4%). Overall, athlete and military participants scored similarly on the outcome measures used in this study. The quantitative stage of this study also served as a method of recruiting participants for the qualitative stage. Through maximum variation sampling, 24 individuals (9 athletes, 15 military veterans) participated in a qualitative interview. The following chapter addresses the qualitative stage of this study.

## CHAPTER V

### STAGE 2: QUALITATIVE STAGE

The second stage of the study included single, one-on-one qualitative interviews with Stage 1 athlete and military participants, analysis of the interview data, and member reflection of the developed themes. These efforts addressed this study's Aim 2: Compare the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans.

#### **Stage 2 Participants (Qualitative Interviews)**

Participants for Stage 2 of the study (qualitative interviews) were recruited from Stage 1 participants who indicated an interest in engaging in an interview on the REDCap survey; at the conclusion of the outcome measures portion of the survey, participants were asked if they would be interested in engaging in an interview that would focus on their transition experience.

#### **Qualitative Data Collection**

All interviews were conducted over the phone. Informed consent was collected from each participant prior to engaging in the interview questions. Any questions or concerns regarding the interview were also addressed at this time. Interview participants completed one semi-structured interview, which was recorded on a password-protected recording device. Interviews were transcribed into Word files and stored on a password-protected computer. Transcription was completed by a combination of a transcription service and the first author. The duration of the interviews ranged from 18-50 minutes and averaged 32 minutes. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym, which was then attached to the transcript and any identifiable information presented in the interview was removed to protect the participant's identity.

## **Qualitative Analysis**

Analysis occurred in parallel with data collection and began with multiple readings of each transcript to gain awareness and a general understanding of each participant's perception of their transition experience. As the first transcript was read, notes and comments were made next to statements that were interesting or seemed to have particular relevance to the purposes of this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thorough readings and note-taking allowed the researcher to recognize bias, focus interpretation, and initiate coding. This approach of being open to anything is known as open coding. Notes and codes were grouped, or categorized, in a process known as axial coding (Charmaz, 2014). Categorized data helped assist the development of the main topics, or themes, of this study.

The second transcript was approached in the same manner as the first; a separate list of notes and comments were made on the transcript. Notes and comments from both transcripts were recorded in a Word document to create a master list of concepts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Considerations for additional codes were also made. Information recorded in this master list did not contain identifying information (i.e., indicating whether the participant was an athlete or military). As transcripts continued to be analyzed, this provided an opportunity to observe any patterns emerging from the data as a whole, as opposed to separating out comments based on whether the participant was an athlete or military veteran. This coding process continued for all transcripts. The constant comparative method was used to continuously integrate newly analyzed qualitative data with previously analyzed data (Glaser, 1965). This process also allowed newly collected data to be compared with previously collected data and established

codes. When new codes were needed to capture data in the newly transcribed interviews, these new codes were applied to previous transcripts to determine relevancy and provide consistency throughout the analysis.

Table 5.1 outlines the 10 main categories that emerged from the inductive coding process: 1) factors influencing transition, 2) transition challenges, 3) reasons for transitioning, 4) resources, 5) lifestyle, 6) defining the transition, 7) identity, 8) aspects of career, 9) personal characteristics, and 10) recommendations. The codes used within each category are also presented.

**Table 5.1**  
Stage 2 Coding Framework

Categories	Codes
1. Factors influencing transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Mental resilience/mental state</li> <li>• Roles &amp; activities</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Relationships – personal, social, family</li> <li>• Preparation/planning</li> <li>• Religion &amp; beliefs</li> <li>• Organizational aspects</li> <li>• Prior experience</li> <li>• Training</li> </ul>
2. Transition Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finances</li> <li>• Ability to focus on transition</li> <li>• Culture shock/adjustment</li> <li>• Psychological impact</li> <li>• Medical issues</li> <li>• Translating skills</li> </ul>
3. Reasons for transitioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical</li> <li>• Forced</li> <li>• End of contract</li> <li>• Desire to switch</li> </ul>
4. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilized – coping</li> <li>• Desired</li> <li>• Recommended</li> <li>• Stress reduction techniques</li> </ul>
5. Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical activity</li> <li>• Social engagement</li> <li>• Freedom of choice</li> <li>• Adjustments</li> <li>• Quality of life</li> </ul>
6. Defining the transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful</li> <li>• Comparison to others</li> <li>• Comparison to other transitions</li> <li>• Regrets</li> </ul>
7. Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entering a new role</li> <li>• Goals</li> <li>• Finding a (new) purpose</li> <li>• Change in self definition</li> </ul>
8. Aspects of career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges</li> </ul>
9. Personal characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outlook</li> <li>• Attitudes</li> </ul>
10. Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestions for others who are transitioning</li> </ul>

Coded segments were then reviewed to identify significant statements that illustrated the essence of each code. These significant statements provided a better understanding of how participants experienced their respective transition and were highlighted to be later used in theme development. Additionally, coded segments were reviewed without identifying whether the statements were from an athlete or military participant. This allowed for the development of themes that were representative of both



former athletes and military veterans. The software package MAXQDA (Version 11) was used to organize transcripts, develop codes, and identify patterns among coded segments.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Data analysis revealed 4 themes regarding the transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans: 1) the necessity of preparation for the transition process, 2) factors impacting the career transition process, 3) transitioning resulted in the loss of structure, and 4) establishing oneself outside of former career.

#### **Theme 1: The necessity of preparation for the transition process**

Participants saw preparation for transitioning out of an athletic or military career as essential for successful adaptation. Both athletes and military personnel asserted how important it is to recognize the transition is “*inevitable*” (Army, Male) and “*no matter what, eventually you’re going to get out*” (Navy, Male). Therefore, individuals in these careers should always be prepared for the next stage “*because you don’t know what’s going to happen*” (Navy, Male). Even though participant M09 (Army) indicated he had experienced a successful transition out of the military, he discussed how it was important for individuals to recognize and accept that no transition would be without difficulty:

So whether it’s successful or not I think that you’re going to be stressed and there’s going to be some stuff that you’re going to have to deal with.

**Relating current transition to previous experiences.** Many participants struggled to compare their current transition to any previous experiences. One participant described the transition out of college athletics as “*unique*” (Softball, Female) and another (Marine, Male) expressed feeling “*ignorant*” of the process of transitioning out of a career and what it entailed. If an individual has not had an experience that is similar or comparable to this particular transition, they are likely unaware of what steps or resources

are necessary to prepare for their career exit. This was especially true for Participant M12 (Marine). He discussed not fully understanding his transition beforehand, which affected his preparations for the process.

There are a lot of resources that I could have taken advantage of if I had known that I should have. You don't really realize what a big change it is until you make that change. You kind of, you know you I guess you just don't understand what getting out actually looks like. ... I was just kind of, I was kind of ignorant to the whole thing. I thought everything would be great and there would be no issues and yeah it wasn't until after getting out that I kind of realized it's not as easy as it seems.

While many participants struggled to compare the current transition to any other experience, some identified the transition into (or within) their respective career was comparable in some ways.

The only transition that I can think of that was similar would be, I also swam in high school and making the transition from being a two sport student to being a one sport athlete and then at the collegiate level, that was a big change for me. – Golf, Female

Transitioning [into the military] was a massive culture shock and then transitioning out, again, probably even more so. – Marine, Male

It was easier going in. But coming out it's just, I don't think there's anything to compare it to so far for me. – Air Force, Female

Participants with comparable previous experiences had a better understanding of how to prepare and “[knew] *what to expect*” to some extent “*because [they had] already been there*” (Army, Female).

**Methods of preparation.** Several participants discussed ways in which they prepared for their career exit transition. Preparation was considered so important that several participants considered it a key aspect of a successful transition. When participant A01 (Golf, Female) was asked how she would define a successful career transition, her

definition focused on having goals for yourself and putting in the time to accomplish them.

How would I define a successful transition? Well I think having a defined goal. ... I think having a bigger picture goal and realizing you're going to have to take steps along the way to get there. So having a big picture goal.

Others discussed their extensive "*planning and lining stuff up*" (Marine, Male) and how this kind of preparation "*definitely makes a world of difference*" (Navy, Male).

Participant A08 (Cross country, Female) discussed how it is important to prepare and have goals, but it should "*be in moderation*" so a person does not find themselves unhappy due to over preparing or lack of preparation. In her view, it was important to find balance in preparations to ensure flexibility as the transition unfolds and situations arise and alter the process.

***Experienced role of organization.*** Nearly every veteran participant discussed attending their branch's transition assistance program. While each mentioned how it had helped in some ways, many indicated it was "*hard to really tailor it down to each person's needs*" and that the military can "*only do a broad spectrum [approach] and hope that works*" (Navy, Male). As such, some military participants did not feel completely compared for their specific role change. Athletes indicated more "*informal*" (Lacrosse, Male) transition assistance from faculty members or athletic department staff. However, one athlete participant discussed attending a course preparing individuals for "*life after being a student-athlete*" (Softball, Female).

***Recommended role of organization.*** Considering the inability to compare this experience to any other, and the difficulties associated with the process, several participants discussed how transitioning individuals should receive "*employment assistance*" (Coast Guard, Male) to prepare for the transition out of their current career.

Employment assistance would help make transitioning individuals aware of resources, skills, and other interests that could be pursued outside of their previous career. This was highlighted by participant A08:

A lot of athletes just aren't prepared to leave their sport because everybody thinks that they're gonna be a professional player, not everybody, but a good chunk. And then when that doesn't work out, what do they have? They don't have anything to fall back on. I feel like career resources are really important for athletes ... finding out that there are avenues in sports that you can take and then avenues that aren't involved in sports that you can take. Exposing them to those opportunities I think is super important. – Cross country, Female

Participant M04 (Navy, Male) also suggested a method of preparation for the transition would be to work alongside someone to establish next steps and remaining connected to establish a level of accountability.

Forced to almost having to sit down and talk with somebody like realistically about what your goals are...what you're going to do. And then maybe like a checkup afterwards, along the way, or something.

Participants also insisted it was important to provide transition assistance before individuals were no longer part of their respective organization. There was concern that if an individual had already left their previous career setting, they would no longer have access to individuals or resources that could benefit the transition process.

If you really want to make an impact on a student athlete, or students, once they leave the building, you have to prepare them before they leave. Because once they're gone, I'm sure for people who don't continue education, they're kind of just thrown out there in the work world. That's going to be a tough transition for sure. – Track & Field, Male

Participant M12 (Marine, Male) discussed the need to connect transitioning veterans to peers prior to exiting their military career.

But something that would be really helpful to get set up is once people get transitioned is a support community after the military. So once, once you are out of the military, you're done. Those resources are no longer available to you unless you retired. So, there are a lot of veteran service organizations. And if a more robust effort of getting people plugged into those prior to transitioning out would be helpful. There is a wealth of resources out there through those veteran service organizations and it's kind of being aware of them. And unless you get plugged into those again you just don't know what you don't know.

Military participants noted that there “*is a wealth of resources out there*” (Marine, Male) and to “*start earlier*” with transition preparation considering “*there are so many programs that you can take advantage of*” (Army, Female) that are “*heavily underutilized*” (Marine, Male) due to lack of awareness. Some felt as though their organization had not done an adequate job of making individuals aware of all the resources available for those who are transitioning. As such, participants recommended athletic departments and the military should be more engaged in the transition preparations.

I think as an athletic department they need to do a better job getting their athletes ready for the real world. But there was nothing there to help with mental health after graduation. So, I think as departments they could do more to help. – Softball, Female

I think that it would help if the military prepared me better beforehand. ... You have to ask for all of that assistance, and you have to seek it out. You have to do your own research and you have to talk to people. I think the military should do a better job of preparing transition. – Army, Male

**Regrets.** A few participants specifically discussed regrets they had regarding preparing for the transition process. Participant A04 (Softball, Female) recognized she had not allowed herself enough time to prepare for exiting athletics.

I would have prepared for [the transition] soon, not even just my final year but use my free time more wisely to better myself and make me a more well-rounded person.

Participant M12 (Marine, Male) began to reiterate feelings of regret because he wished he had made “*better use of his resources*” and also his “*need to want to hold on to it a little bit longer.*” However, he also recognized how this would impact his current situation.

I think I would have staged in just a little bit longer. Well, you know, I take that back. If I would have done that, I wouldn’t have got the job I have now.

This realization was one shared by participant M06 (Army, Male) who indicated, “*any change in a series of events would change where I’m at currently.*”

### **Recommendations to prepare for the psychological impact of the transition.**

Participants recommended that preparing for a transition out of a structured and regimented environment, such as athletics or the military, involved recognizing the potential psychological impact of this type of career. Participant M01 (Army, Male) described how the nature of a military position is psychologically challenging. Therefore, he discussed how it was important to prepare for the impact this may have on the transition process.

[The military is] designed to break people down and make them into whatever they need for that time and sometimes it’s not a good...it’s not normal. It’s not a normal way of thinking. It’s very animalistic. It’s very primal. It’s very basic. Survive and you are the alpha in every situation. It can really do some damage to people that are not prepared. ... I think you should always be prepared to transition because you don’t know what’s going to happen.

He also defined a successful career transition by how well an individual is able to maintain their psychological well-being throughout their time in the military and then during the transition process.

I think [a successful transition] all hinges on that mental side of [stuff] because physical stuff is going to happen. You're going to do stuff in the military. You're going to get hurt, but you can do that riding a bike or getting in a car accident or physical stuff, but the mental side, that's where it all kind of starts to deteriorate and change the person that you are. So if you can get out as close to the same person as you went in, I feel like that's a successful transition, but unfortunately that's probably the farthest thing from what actually happens the majority of the time. – Army, Male

In order to address the drastic change associated with leaving a structured career and entering into a new role, which may lack that same structure, participant A10 (Swimming/diving, Male) stated it was important for individuals to access a counselor within the year of transitioning out. He also emphasized working with athletes over time to best prepare them for their transition.

I think it would be better for each individual to be preparing before their last season or before their last year. I think it would be helpful for coaches or some sort of counselor to come in and give like a session, maybe a couple throughout the season, to help the athletes prepare.

***Experienced lack of assistance.*** Participants made it clear that it was important to talk with someone at the beginning of the transition process, given the psychological impact that may occur. However, there was an apparent lack of assistance to address the mental impact of the transition process. Participant A04 (Softball, Female) was frustrated “*there was nothing to help with mental health after graduation.*”

But talking about the transition outside of going from a sport to not playing a sport anymore. Especially from going, playing a sport in college to working like a job is completely different. I think that [talking] would be beneficial. – Lacrosse, Male

Because just talking about this to somebody, just letting everything out, it would help out a lot. ...immediately after you get out. – Army, Male

Participant M04 (Navy, Male) perceived a lack of support for those who had endured hardships during their time in the service.

Some of the psychological impact of going from you know people that have been down or they've tried to take lives or something like that to moving over to a civilian life. Still the effects and the trauma of that afterwards. I still feel like that needs to be addressed more, as well as some of the disability things like that, that does come along with it.

Many participants reflected on the potential benefit of talking with someone about their transition and how doing so would better prepare individuals for life after athletics or the military. Participant A03 (Lacrosse) wished someone would have been there to talk with her about what it meant to exit an athletic career.

I guess it would have been nice to have been told like it is okay to feel a little upset or like just like even if you like cry because or not being part of a team anymore but you just keep pushing through because eventually great things are going to come. It just takes a while. It is not something that I could have just snapped into right away.

Participant M04 (Navy) recognized he wasn't "*mentally prepared to get out*" and having someone to help him prepare for the impact of the transition could have been beneficial.

***Influence of stigma on seeking help.*** Participants were concerned that fear of judgment would prevent some from seeking out help. The stigma associated with talking to a professional about the transition was primarily discussed by military participants and is likely an engrained aspect of military culture that needs to be addressed.

But I think one of the problem is, problems, which, I don't know how to fix it either is getting a veteran to actually open up about certain things that they might not feel comfortable talking to a therapist or talking to someone else. – Navy, Male

Yeah plus people, especially for athletes and military members you know we're supposed to be tough like to say like you know okay you've got resiliency issue or you know [seeking help] just carries that stigma I guess is what people are worried about. It carries a stigma of like okay I'm going to be labeled mentally defective. Nobody wants to be labeled ... And it's an ego thing, it's a pride thing yeah athletes and military don't do well with having any of those questioned. – Navy, Male



Stigma associated with seeking professional help prevents athletes or veterans from receiving help that could greatly benefit preparations for the transition process.

I think part of it is if you say that you need help, especially with military culture, it's like, "No, I don't need help. I'm fine. I got this." You don't realize where things are surprising or difficult or you would want to talk through it. – Air Force, Female

## **Theme 2: Factors impacting the career transition process**

Participants indicated several factors involved in the successes and challenges of their career transition processes. Responses varied with regard to what was most influential during the individual's transition. However, athletes and military veterans indicated similar aspects of social, personal, and career life they perceived to have impacted their transition experience.

**Internal factors.** Internal factors which impacted the transition process are those residing within an individual. Participants discussed how internal factors of age, personal outlook, and religion/spirituality impacted the transition process.

**Age.** Military participants discussed how their age when they entered the service influenced the transition process; for some, the age they entered into the military was connected to life experience, which influenced their overall outlook. Participant M16 (Air Force), who enlisted when she was 19 years old, found that when she transitioned out of the military she *"felt like [she] was brand new and was just starting completely over"* due to a lack of prior experience in a civilian job. Opposite of that was participant M01 (Army, Male) who went into the service at a later age.

So, going into it at 28, yeah, I think I had enough life skill and I thought I knew who I was. Yeah, I think that I did have an advantage because I had life experience going in. I don't feel like I got as brainwashed as I would have if I had gone in when I was 18.

Participant M02 (Army) also benefited from joining at a “later” age. She joined around age 22 and had held a job prior to her military position.

I had had a job and everything else beforehand and it helped me ... I already knew what to expect as far as the work and you know having a boss. So, I think it helped me.

**Personal outlook.** Some participants found their personality and attitude benefited their transition experience. When participant A05 (Track & Field) found himself missing the competitive nature of his sport, his personal outlook helped him find ways to overcome the loss.

I would say in general I’m a very positive and upbeat person. So, I think that certainly helps. I’ve been able to kind of find the positive in situations and instead of being really depressed, I’m not doing that anymore. I kind of find other ways to channel that competitiveness.

Other participants discussed how their need for organization and desire for personal growth influenced their transition.

I like planning things and I don’t really like just going with the flow that much, so because of that I did start planning my transition, like I said, in December. – Cross country, Female

...my personality ... I don’t usually sit still, I have to be active in something caused me to take a look at sort of what I wanted to do in the future. ... So yeah I think, you know my kind of...I call myself an A-. I’m not really a Type A but I’m kind of an A-. You know just I have a lot of things that I would like to explore and so, so I brought that with me out of the military and into my transition. – Army, Female

**Religion/spirituality.** A few athlete participants discussed the importance of their religious beliefs. As they were exiting their career, these individuals realized how religion “made the transition a lot easier” (Golf, Female) and was “the most significant influence” (Swimming/Diving, Male) on the process.

Whenever things were a little rough I would pray ... and I think that was really beneficial because for me it's nice to believe in something that's greater than myself and something that can make me feel like I can do anything. And to always have that support and that love really helps push me in the right direction. – Lacrosse, Female

I'm also a very spiritual person, and so I have always in theory found my identity in God as my creator, but I had to very much focus on that in practice once this big part of me had ... or this big, important piece of my life had ended. – Swimming/Diving, Male

**External factors.** External factors which impacted the transition process were present in a participant's environment. Participants discussed relationships and aspects of career as external factors, which influenced the transition process.

**Relationships.** Both participant groups indicated having a positive support system was overwhelmingly the most influential aspect of their transition. For many participants, their family provided a level of unconditional support that was beneficial during the transition process.

I think having everyone's support makes you feel like you can do anything and that you can really believe in yourself even if you feel totally lost. And I get that support from all of my family, all of my friends and especially those from my college and it's incredible to be close, I wouldn't be where I'm at today without all of their support. And it just makes me feel like even if I do fail I have people to tell my failure to and they're not going to mock me instead they're going to lift me up. – Lacrosse, Male

My family [has been the most supportive]. They support me no matter what. – Navy, Male

Other sources of support were coaches, administrators, university staff and faculty, and significant others.

My advisor, like I said earlier, was really helpful and I guess she's been more helpful in like an emotional standpoint of like leaving and being upset about leaving and being happy to leave and dealing with like the weird two-sided emotions that came along with that. – Cross country, Female

It was good to have my spouse and my family to kind of talk to...to say you know there's more after this. This is not the end. This is only a transition into something else. – Army, Female

Participant M16 (Air Force) had an older brother who had served in the military and he was able to give her advice and guidance, which positively influenced her transition.

I had an older brother who was in, so as he was getting out, well he got out like a couple years ago. But as I was getting out, he was like, "Okay, well this is gonna be weird just so you know."

Many participants also discussed seeking support and advice from former teammates or veterans who had already gone through the transition process.

I think connecting with other former student-athletes has been the absolute best. Finding the people who had similar experiences to me. ... just having other people that understand. Having someone to talk to has been great. – Softball, Female

[Connecting with veterans on campus] was nice, one, for that veteran community, but also just to find grad students that I had something in common with and they were not fresh out of undergrad like 22 or actually were an undergrad. – Air Force, Female

Remaining connected to aspects of one's former career was considered to positively influence the transition process. It helped ease an individual out of their former role and into a new one. Participant M14 (Army, Female) described a sense of comfort by connecting with others who had served:

Being around other veterans. That is really where I feel the most comfortable. You know because it feels like you're like your tribe, like your people who speak your language. They know your acronyms and you know they kind of have that military mindset. So that's been helpful.

Athletes also found comfort in remaining connected to their former career in some capacity. Some participants still competed and several discussed entering into a coaching role, which provided an opportunity "*to get some experience on the resume*" (Softball,

Female). For others, it was simply a way to remain connected to their sport and be part of the competitive atmosphere.

But between working in athletics and getting to be a volunteer coach and all that, I'm still involved in the sport. Or as I'm sure some people just completely plucked away from it and they had no connection, they'd be a lot more difficult. – Track & Field, Male

I'm volunteer coaching with the cross-country team on campus, so that's kind of my replacement I suppose, for lack of better words. – Cross country, Female

Participant M13 (Air Force) was surprised by how much her transition process benefited from remaining connected with the military community.

I really didn't think that being a veteran was going to be a big part of my life, but it has been. It's been really helpful to have that sense of community back again that I didn't think I was going to be missing.

*Defining career transition success based on peers.* Part of remaining connected to and maintaining relationships with former peers also influenced how participants defined their transition. For some participants, success of their own transition was defined by comparing their experiences to the experiences of others who had recently or were currently engaged in the transition process. Participant M07 (Marine, Male) discussed how becoming independent and being able to support oneself defined a successful transition and how this compared to a peer's experience.

As of right now, I don't like comparing myself to you know like other like stories but if the shoe fits, wear it. In comparison I've seen some people who are already on the verge of homelessness and they got out only probably a year before me. ... like one in particular, he's been couch bouncing for the past 6 months. So that is unsuccessful transition that he is still having to rely on people.

Participant A01 (Golf, Female) also compared her transition experience to those of former teammates:

I made goals and I planned and a lot of my fellow former student athletes who are really struggling transitioning into the adult world, finding a job or staying connected with friends, I feel like because they don't have a really solid idea of who they are. ... I think just not having the defined goal of where they want to be, not really knowing what they like, what they don't like, knowing how to express themselves and being willing to put themselves out there and kind of expecting things to be done along the way for them.

*Aspects of career.* Participants considered the experience within their athletic or military career as a positive influence. Participant A04 (Softball) discussed how the mentality she adapted during her athletic career influenced her transition process.

...as a student-athlete, I was kinda taught to have that mentality. The “go get it” mentality. Like you have to make it happen. You have to go do this, type of thing.

This type of mentality influenced her to be proactive in establishing her next steps because she felt as though she just “[*had*] to make [*the transition into a new career*] happen.”

*Former position.* Some participants addressed how their particular role within the military or athletics influenced the transition.

Being in the role I was in the military, you had to act on your own. ... You also had to be proactive, to read things and double check things. I think that really helped when I got out ... I was able to adapt quickly to getting back out and getting used to it, which I do think in a lot of ways the military did prepare me for. – Navy, Male

One participant “*did a lot of work on the [unit] budget*” (Air Force), which helped him learn how to create a budget for his family. This ultimately benefited how prepared he felt to address any financial concerns that may have been associated with his career exit and the possibility of income loss. Participant M11 (Coast Guard) discussed how his job within the military prepared him for the transition into a civilian career.

I had such a broad job. ... I had leadership and I had confidence and I had twenty years of experience in the health care field. I think it all helped [the transition].

An athlete participant discussed that his coach entrusted him with additional responsibilities on the team; he would “*help the younger athletes, help them develop*” (Track & Field). He recognized how leading in this capacity helped prepare him as a leader for future careers.

*Structure of former career.* Other participants found the structure of their former career helped prepare them for their next role. One athlete participant (Lacrosse) discussed how the structure of his former athletic career helped prepare him for more unstructured life events outside of sports. For transitioning veterans, the structure of the military prepared some veteran participants for college.

Yeah, I think the structure actually helped me become a better student, because I was an online student for the first year. I think having the ability to structure myself really helped out with being able to be a good online student because you really have to have the motivation to do it. – Army, Male

For me it was, it’s easy. I mean you’re already used to a schedule. You’re already used to going to classes and being some place at a certain time. – Army, Female

*Leadership.* It was apparent that a participant’s leaders were influential on the career transition process. However, there were mixed views on whether leadership could be regarded as having positively or negatively influenced the transition. Participants discussed how support from leadership, whether it be from coaches or senior leaders, allowed an individual to begin preparing themselves for life after leaving their respective careers. Some were “*appreciative towards coaches*” (Softball, Female) and felt as though their leaders and unit were “*pretty good about allowing*” (Army, Female) time for transition preparations.

On the other hand, many viewed their leaders as a hindrance to navigating the career transition process; military participants had a tendency to present this view of leadership. Participant M07 (Marine, Male) indicated, “*some leadership have adverse reactions to [the transition out] like oh you know you’re a quitter kind of thing,*” which can cause those under that person’s command to feel unsupported. He also stated:

You know if someone is trying to better themselves or trying to explore their options, you as a leader shouldn’t make them think twice about that or make them feel bad about that because if you’re being a true leader, you want the best for your subordinates. No matter what. Even if it’s at possible cost to you.

One participant stated, “*it is like you are by yourself because they kind of feel like you are abandoning them*” (Army, Male). Participant M06 (Army) discussed a similar lack of support from his leaders.

Towards the end of me getting out, there’s this notion of toxic leadership and it seemed like we had a lot of that going on, specifically in my chain of command. I had like, I’m one of several people that I worked with that could tell you probably the same thing...that we felt like we had some toxic leaders that didn’t necessarily have our best interest at heart, but more so their career gain.

Leadership also influenced one’s ability to focus on the career transition and prepare for life after the military. However, participant M12 (Marine, Male) discussed it is important to recognize leadership support was not consistent across units:

Some commands do a better job of really cutting that individual loose and saying, ‘hey, okay we want you to focus on your transition’ and others, you know still have a mission to complete and they need resources. ... there are some units where the leadership just doesn’t let them go and then there are others where they go above and beyond. So it varies a lot.

Other military participants echoed how the military worked to “*get their money out of you*” (Navy, Male) prior to transitioning out. Therefore, there was not much time to “*really process what was happening or figure out how to do it*” (Marine, Male).



A few athletes also discussed negative leadership experiences, with regard to coaches specifically. Participant A06 (Lacrosse) indicated his coaching staff had a tendency to “*ignore players*” who were preparing to leave and “*pushed them to the side.*” As such, he found his coaches to be unsupportive during his transition. The effects of negative leadership left participant A01 (Golf) looking forward to her transition out of athletics:

Before it ended I was so consumed. It was a difficult ending. We had some coaching changes. The team dynamic changed a little bit towards the end so it was...it became more of a stressor and more of a ‘I just want to be done with this’ ... and I was really anxious to be done with something that consumed so much of my time.

### **Theme 3: Transitioning out of a career equated to the loss of structure**

Structure was viewed as an inherent part of an athletic and military career. For an athlete, structure was defined as scheduled practices or workouts, competitions, and having a coach to lead and hold you accountable. Those in the military, not surprisingly, indicated they are regimented in nearly every aspect while they are serving, from what to wear and where to be at all times. Leaving a career in either field meant an individual was no longer part of their respective structured organization.

**Positive perceptions of structure loss.** For many, the loss of structure was viewed as a positive aspect to transitioning. It meant having the freedom to make decisions.

As an athlete your schedule was so set. Everything. You’re instructed to do everything. There’s not much freedom within your schedule, within the time of your day. The transition out of it, having all the freedom of making your own schedule and “adulting”, per say. It hits you like a brick wall sometimes. – Softball, Female

Freedom I guess is the biggest thing. I can basically go and do what I want. I don’t have to answer to anyone. I don’t have to worry about, okay, well is someone watching my every move? – Army, Male

Those exiting the military were exposed to the freedom of choice and “*of personal expression*” (Marine, Male), which is not a concept prevalent within the military.

Separating from a structured career also meant being afforded the opportunity to “*pursue your own thing and do what you enjoy*” (Navy, Male). This was especially influential for military participants who had transitioned into a student role, chose to pursue a college degree, and were no longer part of a strictly regimented group.

When you’re in, everyone has a common mission, everyone has a common goal, at least in the different areas you’re in. But when you get out it’s a lot more different because everyone has different ideas of what they’re doing. Everyone’s in a different stage of life. Everyone’s doing different things. It’s really getting used to that. – Army, Male

Participants’ description of the freedom of choice also included waking up whenever one desired and deciding to not attend something without fear of punishment. Freedom from structure also meant responsibility shifted to the participant who could now decide what to do and how to do it.

It’s definitely different. I’ve got responsibilities to myself now instead of my boss. The pressure of me to do well in school is my own really as opposed to pressure from my boss to get a report done or get a test done or something like that. I know I’m a lot more relaxed now. A lot calmer now. – Air Force, Male

For participants M03 (Marine, Male) and M13 (Air Force, Female), transitioning out of the military meant freedom from the responsibility of their careers.

Like it was a very long time of you will do this and you will do this and ... endless rigidity and structure. And while I like rigidity and structure, I like making my own. [Now] I don’t have to answer to anybody. Nobody has to answer to me ... and that’s nice. It’s nice being free of that dual responsibility of both being beholden and having people beholden to you.

It’s really just that I would fail. No one’s going to die. I’d still have a job. I don’t get court-martialed. There was just so low-risk feeling. I had my own time and I could leave when I wanted to. I thought it was just so relaxing. My blood pressure got better. It was all good things.

**New opportunities.** While some military participants retired out of their role, most indicated they had opted to leave when their contract ended (i.e., decided not to reenlist). These individuals viewed transitioning out as an opportunity “*to do bigger and better things*” (Army, Male) and to “*make a change and try something new*” (Marine, Male). Participant M16 (Air Force, Female) wanted the opportunity to start a family and realized this change in lifestyle would only be achievable for her if she transitioned into a civilian career.

Well, for me, a big part of why I got out was because of my scheduling and like eventually wanting to settle down and have a normal 9 to 5 life. Whereas before I was working crazy shifts that changed every two days and it was hard to maintain any kind of social life.

**Difficulties associated with loss of structure.** While some viewed the freedom from structure as a positive aspect of exiting a career and saw it as an opportunity to explore new areas of interest, others found it difficult. No longer having the structure of their respective career organization meant athletes and military veterans had to independently navigate free time and responsibilities. Many had become “*institutionalized*” (Marine, Male) and grown accustomed to being told what to do, when to do it, and how. Participant M03 (Marine, Male) discussed the difficulty of not having structure and stated, “*there have been times when it’s pretty nerve-wracking.*” Free time also allowed the mind to wander and, for some, it forced them to relive events and feelings they had not previously addressed. This was especially true for participant M06 (Army, Male):

I also got out 100% disabled, service connected disability. Multiple physical issues. And mental issues. And back when I was in the military it was you know just shut up, drink water, and continue the mission. It’s about the mission. You just suck it up. Now I have free time on my hands and I actually have to face these issues that I have.

Participant M14 (Army, Female) discussed how it took her a while to realize she was “free” because she was “*still so used to being regimented*” all the time. She also experienced a loss of her safety net, which was created by the structure of the military.

You know it’s very safe. I mean it’s sort of ironic to think of the military as being safe, right, because your whole mission is to protect and defend the country and put your life on the line if necessary. But within that group of people on your life and you feel very safe and protected like you know who you can count on.

The loss of structure caused feelings of being “*overwhelmed*” (Softball, Female) or “*lost*” (Marine, Male). To overcome these negative feelings, participants discussed attempting to create structure in other ways, such as setting daily goals or creating checklists to ensure they continued to accomplish tasks.

So just being able to kind of create my own schedule kind of left me in a little bit of chaos ... until I was able to figure out and like motivate myself. I need to keep going with everything that’s going on in my life and I need to figure out what I want to do with the rest of my life because I’m not just being told that I have to be somewhere. Having all that freedom is pretty different. – Lacrosse, Female

There’s no structure. If that makes sense. That’s the biggest thing like there’s no you know set time to be here or there or what I have to accomplish in a day and that’s been a struggle to like you know I have to set daily goals for myself or else you know I just kinda of like walk around shaking my head like I don’t know what to do. – Army, Female

***Finding balance.*** Participants struggled to find balance in their lives without the structure of their former career organization. Maintaining balance was important as some participants struggled to cope with the loss of structure associated with their former career. Participant M14 (Army) stated she was working on establishing new structure in her civilian life by “*trying to find that balance between what makes [her] feel safe and what gives [her] joy.*” Participant A03 (Lacrosse, Female) addressed the importance of finding balance after transitioning out of a career.

I also think is if you find that balance between living your life and having a lot of free time and social time and also managing to still be happy with where you are and with what you're doing.

Participant M04 (Navy, Male) expressed the importance of maintaining and balancing *“mental and physical happiness.”*

*Physical activity.* Physical activity is an inherent aspect of an athletic or military career. Many participants discussed the difficulty of maintaining a physical activity regimen after exiting their structured organization. Participant M12 (Marine, Male) defined happiness and a successful transition by the ability to maintain a balanced lifestyle, especially with regard to physical activity.

Staying active and staying healthy. You know, a lot of people get out and the first thing to go is, is the exercise and the discipline that they had and that can really wreak havoc on people, you know, with health issues down the road.

Participant M04 (Navy, Male) echoed this sentiment of how physical activity can get pushed aside once you exit the military. He indicated that maintaining some level of physical activity was one of the biggest challenges of transitioning out of a military career.

I feel I was depressed. I was pretty...yeah. I got to a point where I was drinking more, I was not taking care of my health and my personal body as much as I should have. I think at least one of [the biggest challenges] is the physical transitioning, I mean as far as keeping your body, mind, and soul engaged in moving forward.

The lack of physical activity also impacted the transition experience for athletic participants. Participant A02 (Cross country) realized her unhappiness after leaving her athletic career stemmed from a lack of physical activity.

I did have a couple, probably about a month where I didn't run and I wasn't happy so I still need to be active in some sense I think.

Several participants recognized the impact of exercise on their health and made efforts to ensure they were remaining physically active. However, some of these participants indicated struggling to establish a routine considering physical activity had been an aspect of their career they viewed as ‘forced’.

[Physical fitness] has been the biggest change to lifestyle ... kind of being forced to work out was very much a positive in my life. Getting the motivation to work out has been difficult and it’s something that I need to adapt to I think. Just not being forced to really being on a diet or forced to work out. I need to do it. I just see it as so much as a negative now because I was forced to do it for so long. – Softball, Female

Like you’re forced to do it for so long and so part of me kind of says oh I don’t have to do that anymore, even though I feel better when I exercise and I have some sort of exercise routine. I feel physically better and mentally better and emotionally better. I don’t know. It’s kind of a weird little rebellion thing but I’m hoping that I get over it. – Army, Female

**Financial concerns.** The loss of structure for some meant stressing over the loss of guaranteed income. This was a significant issue for many participants who considered the loss of the financial stability associated with their structured career to be the greatest burden of the transition process. Participants revealed they “*were not expecting*” (Marine, Male) certain financial challenges associated with the transition process. Unforeseen financial situations left participants feeling ill-prepared for the “*monetary burden*” (Navy, Male). Participant M16 (Air Force, Female) was concerned with finances and how to navigate obtaining insurance without the assistance of her career organization:

The biggest thing I was worried about was like the health insurance, dental insurance, and how to get that and how it was expensive. Those are probably some of the biggest things and then like what am I gonna do now without someone telling me what to do all the time?

One military participant recognized financial stability is why most people choose to stay in the military.

A lot of people have a hard time making that decision of getting out because they know they have a steady income. And they know job security is pretty darn good in the military. – Navy, Male

This was true for participant M02 (Army), who stated considering staying in the service due to the lack of steady income and security, which made her uncertain of “*how [she] was going to help support [her] family*” and caused her a significant amount of stress.

Participant A04 (Softball, Female) identified how athletes who are transitioning out of their careers struggle with the loss of financial stability.

As an athlete, you kinda had what you needed paid for, whether it be under a scholarship or student loans or whatever it may be. The transition out of that when you no longer have that money coming in is a stressful time.

***Loss of social support system.*** As was evident in the second theme, social support significantly influenced the transition process. Therefore, it is not surprising many participants expressed they struggled with the loss of the built in social support connected to their former organizational structure. Participant A06 (Lacrosse) was an athlete participant in this study, but shared that he had also served in the Navy. This participant indicated the most difficult aspects of exiting either career was the loss of social support.

Yeah, I just lost a lot of friends. The only parallel was really just using any kind of camaraderie with the people that I was in with.

Similarly, participant M12 (Marine, Male) was a military participant in this study who had also been an NCAA Division I athlete. He also described how leaving either an athletic or military career involved the loss of a social support system.

I was a Division I athlete in college too and I you know went out of college into the Marine Corps, but athletics really translate really well into the military. They’re...I mean they are just so similar, just that camaraderie.

One participant described how being part of a structured organization created a “*forced*” social group (Golf, Female); in this way, individuals viewed their peers as a “*guaranteed support system*” (Marine, Male). Participant M16 (Air Force) considered her military social group to be her “*structured family*” and it was difficult to replace this type of support. As such, participants discussed leaving their career meant it was necessary to form new friendships, but found it was harder to meet people who had not been a part of their organization or understood the influence of a highly structured career. Additionally, with energy focused on new jobs and responsibilities outside of their former careers, many indicated difficulty remaining connected and struggled to find the same level of support elsewhere.

I would say the biggest transition is just not being around your teammates and getting to work out with them every day. That’s what I miss the most, is that daily interaction with my coach from college and my teammates; the camaraderie that came with that. – A05

I had a pretty tight group of roommates and guys that I had worked with and went on deployment with and we had gotten pretty tight. So moving away from them and back home where I really didn’t know anybody anymore, it was different. But that was probably the toughest part. – M10

For military participants, one of the more drastic changes of their social network was no longer being surrounded by people who understood what they had been through.

We had people that were going through the same thing as us so you know we could all relate, but it’s hard finding a lot of college freshman who are married and having kids and you know own a house or own their own car and pay their bills. – Army, Male

And I think there’s a frustration in how the civilian world doesn’t quite understand the military, and the military the civilian world. And that’s real frustrating when you’re getting out. ... You kind of fell different from everybody else I guess. – Marine, Male



Military participants also discussed the role this played in their professional lives; veterans were now entering into a workforce with employers and peers who may not fully understand what they had been through or how their skills could be applicable outside of the military.

Maybe the human resources just doesn't understand [how to translate skills] or the military wasn't able to accurately translate [military skills] into something that human resources wants to see. – Marine, Male

To me it is a big transition because you've been forced into a mold and then you're having to work with that and then you have to switch and completely go to something else. – Navy, Male

For athletes in particular, losing a structured friend group meant losing a team who shared a common goal of competing. Losing the competitive atmosphere associated with an athletic career was difficult for some participants.

I miss having or being able to compete. Being able to go out and battle with my teammate for my school. – Softball, Female

I got to go to every competition and play with several different kinds of [players]. I came in as freshman so I got to play with the seniors all the way until I was a senior and got to play with the incoming freshmen. – Golf, Female

#### **Theme 4: Establishing oneself outside of former career**

Participants indicated the process of transitioning out of a career caused some degree of disruption to their identity. Participants who aligned their definition of self with their athletic or military career continued to struggle with the process of redefining who they are outside of their former career. While it could prove to be difficult at times for some participants, a few did state they are “*actually a lot the same*” (Navy, Male) and were simply transferring skills from their former career and applying them in new settings (e.g., a college classroom). Additionally, there was a general understanding that

re-establishing one's identity as a result of transitioning out of a career was just part of the transition process.

I think the same thing that happens for pretty much anyone that transitions out of something is you lose your identity. I was a sailor and I was transitioning from being in the military to going back to being a civilian, but not necessarily having a role in the civilian world. So you kind of have to just figure that out again. – Army, Male

**Purpose.** For many, part of navigating the transition was establishing a new sense of “*purpose*” (Army, Male) and these participants stated how important this was in order to be satisfied outside of a former athletic or military career.

I would say the biggest thing is being able to transfer your passion to a new thing. I think if you don't have something you're really passionate about that kind of gets you up in the morning and you're excited about, I think that makes it really difficult. – Track & Field, Male

I mean it's almost purely psychological getting out to be honest with you. If you're not ready you have to, you have to find a purpose. You have to find happiness. Having a sense of purpose. That's number one. You know we...in the military it was a thing it was purpose of direction, purpose of guidance. Soldiers always had to have purpose that's what the overarching job was ... honestly yeah it's going to college, having a sense of purpose. Doing good for my children's sake. That's really my driving factor. – Army, Male

Being involved in activities outside of one's former career helped provide some participants with a new purpose. For example, participant M10 (Navy) exited the military to attend college and, therefore, stated he “*felt more of a purpose*” once classes started. Participant A03 (Lacrosse) discussed how a position she held outside of her sport provided a new sense of purpose and aided the transition process.

I worked a job as being a mentor during college and that had a lot of help on my transition because I knew by being a mentor...I watched these kids that would help change their lives and so it made me feel really good about myself because I knew that I was able to do something like that. I knew that there was like a purpose for me.

**Happiness.** Some participants considered happiness coincided with finding new purpose during the transition process. Participant M06 (Army, Male) stated:

You have to find purpose. You have to find happiness. Happiness in yourself you know. Honestly, I just say like whatever as long as you're happy and you're positive and you're optimistic and I mean you're not hurting anybody or yourself, like that to me is a successful transition. In the most basic sense I mean it seems like a real simple answer, right? Like it's just being happy. Maintain that sense of purpose...be happy.

Participant A04 (Softball, Female) felt it was important for an individual who is transitioning out of their career and establishing a new role to find happiness with their new position:

I don't think there's one way to describe it cause everyone's gonna be different. I just think as long as the person is content and happy with what they're doing and how it's going, it's successful.

The concept of finding happiness in a new purpose resonated with Participant A03 (Lacrosse, Female):

This is cheesy, but I really feel like I needed happiness. And I say that because I just wanted...doing lacrosse or playing lacrosse was something I loved so it made me happy. So when I left that sport I needed to find something else that made me just as happy which is why I followed my dream of being an engineer even though it was so hard. It just at the end of the day makes me happy with where I am in life even if it's been a struggle getting here.

**Community involvement.** Several participants found new purpose by giving back to the community, whether it be the general community or the one they had been a part of in their former career. Participant A08 (Cross country, Female) volunteered as a coach and viewed it as continuing "*to find joy in sport while not competing.*" This provided her new purpose to replace the loss of her athletic career. For participant M12 (Marine), his position working to help veterans gave him new purpose and direction.

And that part of getting to help my fellow veterans and kind of getting plugged into that community and being around people, you know, with similar background, really made a 180-degree change in the transition process. I was kind of, kind of lost and frustrated until I stumbled upon this job and then everything just kind of seemed to work out after that.

Participant M03 (Marines) also defined a successful career transition based on the ability to positively influence the community.

Somebody who can leave the military better for the experience, richer for the experience, and is able to give something back in a way that is good for them and also good for the people around them. If you can do that then you've pretty much made it.

**Career satisfaction.** In addition to establishing a new purpose, military participants discussed working to find the same level of career satisfaction outside of the military. However, it was apparent how difficult this was for most participants. Many felt as though their position within the civilian world was not as important as the one they held while in the military.

Like it's, it's kind of hard if you've been in the field or you've had a job where you can see results from and you are really good at it. And you know your impact that you're making is worthwhile. Even if the rest of the world doesn't see it. You know your job matters. But I feel like that is kinda of hard to get, the same level of job satisfaction outside of the military. ... My schedule is a lot more open. I have a lot more free time, but I do miss that job satisfaction and stuff like that. – Navy, Male

I'm less stressed, but at the same time, I really miss that influence and that power. So I don't, I don't feel like I'm making as big an impact anymore. – Marines, Male

There was also a sense among military participants that transitioning out of their career meant "*being a nobody*" and being "*at the bottom of the pole again*" (Air Force, Female).

I went from being somewhat in a management position to starting completely over, and now I'm a student so it's different. For sure. – Army, Female

So I think that when I joined it was an entirely different lifestyle you know it wasn't even a job, it changes I guess who you are in your life. And you know I got to that point where I was I guess somebody of importance and then coming out I'm just you know another face behind the desk in school. – Army, Male

Participant M14 (Army, Female) discussed the realization that someone was going to be replacing her in her former position. However, she did not present disappointment or sadness when she gained this insight. Rather, it seemed to motivate her to remain proactive in her transition process.

I learned in the last year before I retired was I'm not that important. So we can keep telling yourselves right up to the last day that you know they just couldn't live without me, they just couldn't without me, but it's not true. You know the next day somebody's butt was in my seat and the mission goes on. You know, someone's coming right behind me to fill the slot that I'm leaving and so really I owe it to myself to take my time and do those things that I need to do to be successful in the future because you know nobody is going to do it for me.

Participants who had become accustomed to their role in the military expressed a sense of uncertainty associated with the transition.

My big concern was that I was going to give up something I was good at and meaningful and go do something I was bad at and it wouldn't even mean anything. – Air Force, Female

...just the general sense of identity for me. I mean I went into the Army right out of college and spent 30 years you know doing a job that I really like and so now what? You know, what's my identity? I'm no longer an Army officer, so what kind of identity do I have? So those are some of the things that I've kind of struggled with. – Army, Female

**Difficulty establishing identity.** Participants indicated a struggle to define themselves outside of their former career. Participant A10 (Swimming/diving) felt caught between his former identity and his new role.

There's definitely like a piece of me that I felt like ... And not like, saying I feel like I've lost a piece of myself would be overdramatic, but it was, like, a very tangible piece of evidence that I was growing up in that ... in something that had defined me for such a long time. And there was a little bit of self ... a little bit of lack of self-identity for a little while, and I had to sort of actively try and recover that in some ways.

Establishing a new identity outside of their former career was a difficulty echoed by many participants. This was especially true for participant M13 (Air Force, Female), who was a military participant in this study and had also competed in NCAA Division I athletics. She compared the concept of identity loss associated with both transition experiences.

Both of them I didn't think they would be difficult, but it was a surprise losing that greater purpose and piece of identity. ... [exiting a military career] was a similar identity confusion [to leaving athletic career].

Participant M01 (Army) discussed how, in the military, he was “*identified by [his] title*” and for that reason “*there was no need to self-identify*” because he’d had an “*identity given to [him]*.” As such, he found it challenging to establish who he was without the military. Participant M13 (Air Force) echoed agreement on how difficult it was for her to now identify who she was outside of the military.

It was a lot simpler when I was in the military. It's part of your identity. Now it's a longer explanation and people question a little bit more. It's more complicated and a weirder explanation now.

Participant A01 (Golf, Female) also illustrated how complicated it can be to establish a new identity; even though she was no longer competitively participating in her sport, she still considered it to be a prominent part of her identity. She stated how this was a difficult and unique aspect of being a transitioning athlete:

So, I think it's not participating in something that you would define yourself by. You don't get the same opportunities to define yourself by it anymore. I think that's the biggest challenge.

Several participants discussed the importance of recognizing that their former career was not the aspect that defined who they are.

I think kind of, at least for me, it's more realizing that it isn't completely my identity. There are other aspects of myself that I can work on other than just running, so I kind of find that comforting. Working on professional development or working on other projects that I can find that I'm passionate about. Things like that kind of help. I think I would've had a lot harder of a time if I was so into the sport that I couldn't pull myself out of it, if that makes sense. – Cross country, Female

I am still young I still have a lot to contribute and I have a lot of interests so I think my, you know my attitudes about wanting to stay active and keep giving back to the community. – Army, Female

### **Comparison of Participants within Themes**

Qualitative analysis indicated former athletes and military veterans had similar transition experiences. However, there were some ways in which their described experiences were difference. Table 5.1 provides a brief overview comparing aspects previously presented within each qualitative theme.

**Table 5.2**  
Comparisons within Themes

Theme	Commonalities	Differences	
		<i>Athletes</i>	<i>Veterans</i>
1. The necessity of preparation for the transition process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of preparation</li> <li>• Relating current transition to previous experiences</li> <li>• Experienced/recommended roles of organization</li> <li>• Regrets regarding preparation efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources provided for transition out were more informal; some not aware of anything available to assist the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Received more formal transition assistance; discussed variety of available resources</li> <li>• Discussed psychological impact and concern of stigma</li> </ul>
2. Factors impacting the career transition process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal factors (e.g., personal outlook)</li> <li>• External factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Relationships, aspects of career (e.g., position, leadership)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed the influence of religion on transition process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed how age influenced the transition process</li> <li>• Nature of career (i.e., risk involved)</li> </ul>
3. Transitioning resulted in the loss of structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive aspect of transition (i.e., freedom of choice)</li> <li>• Experienced difficulties with loss of structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Struggle to find balance, financial concerns, social support</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of competition was difficult; nothing else outside of sport to match</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many opted to make a change</li> <li>• No more fear of punishment</li> <li>• Not surrounded by people who understand experiences</li> </ul>
4. Establishing oneself outside of former career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some indicated no change in self</li> <li>• Finding a new sense of purpose</li> <li>• Experienced difficulty establishing a new identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to continue engaging in sport; remaining connected to former identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced lack of job satisfaction</li> <li>• Having to start over; starting at the bottom</li> </ul>

### Member Reflections

In order to determine whether participants found the results of this research as comprehensible and meaningful (Tracy, 2010), participants were asked to review the drafted themes from this study's qualitative analysis. The member reflection survey can be found in Appendix G. Twenty (n=20) of the invited 24 participants completed the member reflections survey (83.3%) within a 7-day period (Table 5.3). All athlete Stage 2 participants (n=9) and 11 military participants (73.3%) completed the feedback survey. Overall, there was strong agreement with all of the developed themes; average agreement levels for all themes remained above 70%. Athlete participants indicated the widest range



of responses (20-100%) on the ‘loss of structure’ theme. Within this theme, military participants commented on missing having their day structured and stated a lack of direction regarding how to create structure necessary for a successful transition.

The ‘establishing oneself’ theme had the widest range of responses from military participants with 22-100% agreement levels. The theme regarding a new self-definition also received the most feedback, which was all from military participants. One comment from a military participant indicated a feeling as though going in at a later age allowed this individual to establish their identity prior to the military and “go back to that” once they transitioned out. Age was an aspect of personal characteristics influencing the transition process that was captured within the theme text, specifically among military participants. Therefore, these comments regarding the influence of age are captured in the qualitative analysis. Comments on the feedback survey also indicated individuals did not feel differently now or did not find it necessary to establish a new identity due to their transition. The theme text captured how some participants felt they had not changed, thus representing the feedback comments from participants. Participant feedback can be found in Appendix H.

**Table 5.3**

Member Reflections Outcomes (n=20)

Theme	Athlete Participants (n=9)			Military Participants (n=11)			Overall	
	% Range <sup>1</sup>	Mean	SD	% Range <sup>1</sup>	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. The necessity of preparation for the transition process	34-100	72.3	22.7	72-100	93.9	9.3	84.2	19.6
2. Factors impacting the career transition process	60-100	88.4	13.9	65-100	87.1	14.2	87.7	13.7
3. Transitioning resulted in the loss of structure	20-100	74.7	24.9	66-100	87.8	12.7	81.9	19.8
4. Establishing oneself outside of former career	51-85	70.4	10.6	22-100	74	31.9	72.3	23.7

<sup>1</sup>Indicates range of percent agreement among participants

### Qualitative Stage Summary

Qualitative data was collected from 24 individuals who had participated in this study's Stage 1. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews over the phone. Interviews provided a more in-depth perspective of the transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans. Data from these interviews revealed 4 themes: 1) the necessity of preparation for the transition process, 2) factors impacting the career transition process, 3) transitioning resulted in the loss of structure, and 4) establishing oneself outside of former career. Member reflections (n=20) indicated fairly strong levels of agreement for all themes. The following chapter addresses the final stages of this study, which consist of data merging and interpretation.

## CHAPTER VI

### STAGES 3 AND 4: DATA MERGING AND INTERPRETATION

The third stage of this study focused on merging the quantitative and qualitative data to determine the relationship between the two sets of data. The fourth and final stage involved a summary and interpretation of the merged results to discuss to what extent and in what ways the results from the two types of data produce a more complete understanding of the transition experiences of both former athletes and military veterans (Creswell, 2011). The fourth stage also incorporates literature relevant to the merged findings. These actions addressed this study's Aim 3: Determine the relationship between satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition resources and barriers, mental health status, and the described transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans.

#### **Stage 3: Merging the Data**

Quantitative analyses from Stage 1 were reviewed alongside the qualitative analyses (i.e., the themes that emerged) from Stage 2. Comparisons were made between the results of each outcome score and characteristics from each of the 4 themes. Specific questions from the outcome measures were also reviewed to further examine the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study. A side-by-side comparison was selected as the strategy for comparing data analyses from Stages 1 and 2. Table 6.1 is the summary table that merged the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study.

**Table 6.1**

Comparison of Information from Interviews and Survey Data

Theme	Interview Data (n=24)	Survey Data (N=106)
1. The necessity of preparation for the transition process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was discussion regarding the many unknowns of the transition process.</li> <li>• Only 50% of participants indicated they felt prepared/ready or had enough time for the transition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 57.5% agree number of unknowns is bothersome (CTI, Q37)</li> <li>• Athletes and veterans indicated similar levels of readiness</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military participants discussed more formal assistance programs than athletes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military participants had significantly higher control scores than athletes.</li> <li>• Many of the correlational differences between athletes and veterans involved perceived support.</li> </ul>
2. Factors impacting the career transition process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal outlook and characteristics (e.g., “go get it” mentality) influenced the ease of the transition process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletes and veterans indicated similar psychological health, depression scale scores, and confidence scores</li> <li>• 92.4% of participants indicated they were confident in their ability to do well during the transition process (CTI, 30) and had a driving force (89%) to work on the transition (CTI, 3)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants made it apparent that social relationships played a role in the transition process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Supportive/positive influence</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social relationships and perceived support were similar between the groups</li> <li>• Satisfaction with life was strongly and positively correlated to social relationship scores</li> <li>• 94.3% agreed significant others were supporting the transition process (CTI, Q20)</li> </ul>
3. Transitioning resulted in the loss of structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Freedom” of choice apparent among all participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletes and veterans scored similarly on decision independence.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While freedom was appealing and positive, others still concerned with losing security of their structured career.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54.7% of participants were concerned about giving up the security of what they were currently doing (CTI, 14)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ When asked biggest concern or worry, 12/15 (80%) of military participants said finances compared to 2/9 athletes (22.2%)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Military also more likely to discuss concerns continuing to support family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51.9% of participants completely, mostly comfortable with financial standing (QOL, 12)</li> <li>• Military had significantly lower environment scores, which contains financial well-being.</li> <li>• 72% military (compared to 55% from athletes) agreed with having to take others needs into consideration (CTI, 7)</li> </ul>
4. Establishing oneself outside of former career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletes were focused on maintaining a level of competitiveness that had become synonymous with their identity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletes had significantly higher physical scores.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants presented a lack of ability to engage in activities outside of one’s career.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36.8% of participants completely or mostly have opportunity for leisure activities (QOL, Q14)</li> </ul>

Note: QOL: The WHOQOL-BREF.

Q# refers to the item number on the referenced outcome measure.

#### **Stage 4: Interpreting the Merged Data**

Stage 1 quantitative analysis indicated athlete and military participants scored similarly on most of the outcome measures. Stage 2 qualitative analysis revealed 4 themes that captured qualities of the transition experience for both athlete and military participants. In stage 3 the analysis from the first 2 stages was combined using a side-by-side comparison table to illustrate how the quantitative and qualitative data support one another to provide an in-depth understanding of how athletes and military veterans experience the career exit transition process. The following section incorporates relevant literature into the interpretation of the merged data.

##### **Theme 1 Interpretation: The necessity of preparation for the transition process**

**Previous experience.** Both athlete and military participants struggled to compare their current transition to previous experiences. A lack of previous experience caused participants to be unprepared and unaware of all aspects of the transition process. Participants emphasized the importance of preparation to avoid unnecessary hassle due to the fact that many experienced some level of frustration with the number of unknowns they eventually encountered in their process. This was somewhat supported by item 37 on the Career Transition Inventory which states, “the number of unknowns involved in making a career transition bothers me” and received agreement (slightly-strongly) from approximately 58% of participants. Additionally, in the qualitative interviews, only 50% of participants stated being prepared or ready for the transition or that they had enough time to prepare.

Schlossberg’s adaptation (1981) and 4-S model (1995) include previous experience with a transition of a similar nature as an aspect of the individual that may

positively influence the transition process. For the most part, participants in this study acknowledged this particular transition as unique and unfamiliar and, as such, had difficulty comparing it to another experience. A lack of knowledge regarding what the transition process will entail was likely the reason participants continued to stress the importance of preparation; participants likely recognized their own shortcomings with proper preparation and recommended future transitioning athletes and military veterans be more aware. These recommendations are similar to those made by athletes and researchers in previous studies (Cummins & O'Boyle, 2015; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stambulova, et al., 2009) and aligns with Taylor and Ogilvie's model (1994) of athletic adaptation to retirement. Similarly, military veterans and professionals in previous studies (Blackburn, 2016; Robertson & Brott, 2013) recommend significant planning for a successful transition process. The strategy of planning is also an aspect of the 4-S model (Schlossberg, Water, & Goodman, 1995), which is commonly used for military transition research.

**Control.** One notable difference between qualitative (Stage 2) athlete and military participants was the availability of formalized resources provided for the transition; every military participant (while maybe not entirely satisfied with the program) indicated they were provided transition assistance classes. Athlete participants, however, did not indicate such resources. Only one athlete participant discussed anything comparable, which was a course designed specifically for athletes as they entered life after college. Military participants had statistically significantly higher perceived transition control scores transition than athlete participants. The factor of control contains items that determine whether a participant perceives the career transition process as being within

their control as opposed to luck, change, or powerful others. Military participants' higher scores indicated they felt more in charge of their transition process than athlete participants.

Perceived control of the transition is a concept present within the models and theoretical perspectives of both sport- and military-career transitions (Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Previous research has illustrated how control has a positive influence on the career transition process (Latack & Dozier, 1986). A heightened sense of control would lessen the culture shock associated with transitioning out of the military and into a civilian role. Avoiding such difficulties would likely improve one's satisfaction with the transition process. This is supported by previous research, which found the factor of control to positively correlate and significantly influence satisfaction with life scores (Robertston, 2010; Robertson & Brott, 2013).

Most athletes transitioned out of their sport because they were no longer eligible to compete. This likely interfered with one's ability to feel in control of the transition process. Eligibility ending would serve as an external source of control. According to Schlossberg's model (1981), external sources make an individual feel as though they lack control of their own transition process. As such, this may contribute to athlete participants' significantly lower perceived control scores than military participants. Previous athlete-career transition research has found lack of control to have a negative effect on the transition process (Cummins & O'Boyle, 2015; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008; Willard & Lavalley, 2016).

## **Theme 2 Interpretation: Factors impacting the career transition process**

**Personal outlook.** One aspect of the “factors” theme was the influence of internal forces, such as personal outlook, on the transition process. The psychological health domain of the WHOQOL captures perceptions of an individual’s personal characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, personal beliefs, and positive and negative feelings). Analysis found no statistically significant difference between athletes and veterans on this domain. Additionally, there were no significant differences between athletes and veterans regarding confidence toward the transition process. These results indicate similar perceptions of psychological health and confidence between the two groups.

A positive outlook and motivation to adapt to the transition has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on the transition process for athletes (Cummins & O’Boyle, 2015) and veterans (Wands, 2013). Characteristics of an individual (e.g., psychosocial competence) is also an aspect of Schlossberg’s model of human adaptation to transition (1981).

**Social systems.** A prominent aspect of the second theme, regarding factors impacting the transition process, was the influence and importance of social relationships on the transition process. This was evident among all qualitative (Stage 2) participants and was supported by a lack of a statistically significant difference between athletes and military veterans on social relationships and perceived support scores. These results indicate both groups perceived a similar influence from their social support systems. Life satisfaction scores from both athletes and veterans strongly and positively correlated to the social relationship scores, indicating a relationship between satisfaction with life and social relationships. The Career Transition Inventory contains an item (#20) asking



participants to indicate whether or not significant people in one's life are actively supporting them in their career transition. 94.3% of all participants indicated agreement (slightly-strongly) with this statement.

The concept of a social support system is prevalent in much of the research regarding the athlete- and military-career transition experiences (e.g., Robertson, 2013; Stambulova et al., 2009; Werthner & Orlick, 1986) and is included in transition models and theories frequently used to capture the career exit process for these populations (e.g., 4-S Transition Model, Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Career Transition). Social support is often regarded as an essential element for successfully adapting to a transition (Schlossberg, 1981). Results from this study further emphasized the positive influence of one's social support system. Indeed, one of the most prominent aspects of this study's "factors" theme, and arguably throughout the interviews in general, was the positive influence of social support on the transition process.

Several athlete participants discussed the benefit of remaining connected to former teammates, as well as coaches and administration. These individuals provided guidance and support throughout the transition process. These results align with previous research (Werthner & Orlick, 1986; Willard & Lavalley, 2016), which found athletes perceived continued support with their former social network to positively influence the transition process. However, the findings in the current study are not consistent with other previous sport literature (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000), which suggest the system that took care of athletes and their needs offers little support once they are no longer part of the organization. These conflicting results indicate the type of influence that independent athletic organizations can have on an athlete's

transition experience. Further research is needed to clarify specifically what aspects of an athletic organization positively and negatively factor into an athlete's career transition.

One aspect of this study's second theme addressed how military participants experienced difficulty by no longer being surrounded by people who understood what they had been through. This finding relates to a previous study (Ahern et al., 2015), which found veterans felt as though friends and family who had not served could not truly understand what they had been through, despite their best efforts to do so.

Considering the evident importance of social support networks of military peers in the current study and previous research (e.g., Hourani et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2007), it may be of great benefit for those transitioning out of the military to remain connected with peers. It is also important to note that participants in the current study did not discuss difficulty or fear of reconnecting with families, which is often associated with military reintegration (Ahern et al., 2015; Orazem et al., 2017; Wands, 2013).

### **Theme 3 Interpretation: Transitioning resulted in the loss of structure**

**Freedom from structure.** The third theme focused on the loss of structure participants experienced when transitioning out of their respective career. Qualitative participants (Stage 2) discussed experiencing "freedom" now that they were separated from their former, structured career organization. Analysis from the quantitative stage concluded athletes and veterans scores similarly in regard to decision independence. The factor of decision independence indicates whether or not an individual viewed decisions related to their career transition as autonomous. Similar scores between the groups indicated a similar sense of "freedom" or independence in decision making.

This sense of freedom connects to previous research (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993), which found athletes viewed their retirement as a positive change in their lives or consider athletic retirement to be a rebirth (Coakley, 1983). Military veterans in a previous study (Robertson & Brott, 2013) indicated being a civilian afforded them the opportunity to make their own decisions and direction and discussed how this positively contributed to their life satisfaction.

**Difficulty adjusting.** While some participants viewed structure loss as a positive, others found it to be somewhat difficult. Structure provided by athletic departments and the military has been speculated to create a sense of dependency (Ahern et al., 2015; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Athletes and military personnel became accustomed to the guidance and instruction their respective career structure provided. When these structures are no longer a prominent feature in one's life, personal management can then become an issue due to lack of outside experience. Consistent with these findings is previous research with former Olympic athletes (Stephan, 2003), which illustrated the difficulty some participants had adjusting to a lifestyle no longer including structured training, traveling, or competition. It has been argued the overprotective system and privileges associated with an athletic scholarship may cause athletes to develop a sense of "entitlement" (Pepitas & Champagne, 1988). The loss of this type of "privilege" would be difficult for transitioning athletes to cope with if they are not adequately prepared to independently structure themselves.

Qualitative interviews from Ahern et al. (2015) revealed how veterans viewed the military environment as a "family" that took care of its service members and provided structure. The structure of the military provided clarity and simplicity when making

decisions and was something to “hold onto” in the chaos of a war zone (Ahern et al., 2015). Similar to veteran participants in this study, lack of institutional support throughout the transition into civilian life caused veterans in previous studies to feel lost and missing the sense of efficiency (Naphan & Elliott, 2015). For these individuals, the military was seen as simpler and more manageable than civilian life (Orazem et al., 2017).

Overall, participants presented varied responses regarding the influence of structure loss. Opposing viewpoints among participants regarding structure are supported by Moos’ (2002) proposition that an individual’s view of structure is dependent upon preferences; those who are internally oriented will prefer flexibility and individuals who are oriented toward interdependence tend to prefer well-structured situations. While not specifically explored with this research, personal preferences and characteristics may explain the various views of structure loss.

**Financial stability.** Losing an organized structure meant the loss of financial stability. An item on the WHOQOL (#12) indicated approximately 52% of all participants were completely or mostly comfortable with their financial standing. The other nearly 48% indicated having only moderately, a little, or not at all enough money to meet their needs; thus, indicating that participants may in fact be struggling with a lack of financial stability. When qualitative (Stage 2) participants were asked to indicate their immediate worries or concerns regarding the transition, 80% of military participants stated financial concerns (e.g., no longer receiving a consistent paycheck, how to support family), while only 22% of athlete participants stated the same. Additionally, military participants presented specific concerns regarding supporting their families and scored

higher on the question which asked participants whether or not they were taking others needs into consideration.

Athlete and military participants presented a statistically significant difference on environment domain scores, where military participants scored lower than athletes. A feature of the environment domain is financial resources, which may support the difference in financial concerns participants presented in the interviews. A higher environment score may indicate athletes are generally more comfortable with their financial standing, and other related aspects (e.g., access to health care), than military participants. However, even though athletes may have expressed less concern about finances, a few athletes expressed they had become accustomed to their scholarship covering their financial needs. As such, when they transitioned out of athletics, they were uncertain about how they were going to pay bills. Previous research indicates athletes able to focus on opportunities beyond their athletic career, such as other interests or employment, will be more likely to have a smooth transition than athletes who do not establish these options (Schlossberg et al., 1995; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). While not specifically investigated, perhaps athlete participants in this study benefited from being able to prepare for and give consideration to the transition process (e.g., securing employment opportunities) while they were still in athletics. Doing so would have eliminated concern regarding financial stability.

The majority of military participants in this study indicated finances as their main concern with the transition process. Finances were a concern due to lack of planning or understanding of how income would be impacted as a result of the transition. Due to their lack of planning for income changes, military participants in a previous study (Robertson

& Brott, 2013) recommended future veterans develop a financial plan as they prepare for the transition process. These participants commented on the financial difficulties associated with a new civilian position (i.e., lower pay in a civilian job) and how a financial plan lessens monetary concerns. Robertson (2013) explored military transitions and income and revealed the influence of the transition duration on financial stability. Results found those who are in transition longer may experience negative impact on their household income than those with a shorter transition period. While transition duration was not explored in the current study, this could have been a factor in the concern military participants had regarding their financial stability. Military participants may not have been at a time in their transition process that provided them with financial security.

#### **Theme 4 Interpretation: Establishing oneself outside of former career**

The fourth theme focused on defining oneself outside of a former career. Qualitative (Stage 2) athlete participants struggled with the loss of the competitive environment their former career provided. Competition is synonymous with being an athlete and as such it seemed to become a part of their identity. To overcome the loss of competition, many actively engaged in their sport through more recreational outlets or found other activities that would allow them to maintain this competitive spirit. In other words, athlete participants remained active to maintain the competitive identity that had become an inherent aspect of being a collegiate athlete. Athlete and military participants had a statistically significant difference on their physical health scores. The physical health domain contained items related to engaging in activities of daily living, mobility, energy and fatigue, etc. This result indicated athlete participants presented a higher level of activity and satisfaction with their physical health, likely due to continued engagement

in various activities to maintain a competitive identity that had been lost in the transition process. Previous sport literature has also established that when sport, exercise, and physical activity are central to an individual's identity, they are more likely to continue engagement in such activities (Brewer et al., 1993).

**Identity.** Participants indicated a lack of engagement in activities outside of their former career due to schedules or lack of interest. Item 14 on the WHOQOL asks participants to indicate to what extent they have the opportunity for leisure activities. Only 36.8% of participants completely or mostly agreed with this statement, which likely supports the statements provided by qualitative (Stage 2) participants regarding outside activities.

A lack of focus on other activities and interests outside of athletics or the military would make it difficult to establish an identity not solely dependent upon an individual's respective career. The process of narrowing one's identity and a lack of engagement or exploration in other available roles outside of an occupation or ideology can become detrimental to the transition process (Marcia, 1976; Markus, 1977; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). The results of this study, specifically the fourth qualitative theme encompassing changes in defining oneself, indicate that most participants struggled to establish an identity outside of their former career.

Previous research has shown athletes with strong athletic identities have a tendency to experience greater difficulty when transitioning out of their athletic role (Botterill, 1981; Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000; Stambulova et al., 2009; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). While a strong athletic identity may prove beneficial for sport performance, it can become detrimental to self-identification as the individual transitions

out of their athletic career. Athlete participants in this study struggled with the loss of competition, which had become part of their identity. Competition was viewed as an essential part of what it meant to be an athlete and, therefore, became part of how athlete participants defined themselves. Participants in the current study indicated that this loss of competition became more of an issue when they were unable to find activities that elicited the same level of competitiveness as their former career. Without a fulfilling replacement, athletes struggled with the loss of their competitive identity. Sinclair & Orlick (1993) concluded that athletes no longer able to compete at the same intensity or skill level may perceive it as a breakdown in overall ability and adopt a negative view of themselves. Although not specifically expressed by participants in this study, this could explain why athlete participants associated the loss of competition with difficulty establishing a new identity.

Military participants also discussed a similar struggle with establishing a new identity. Military participants' narrow focus on their career caused feelings of uncertainty and how to establish themselves outside of their former career organization. Several participants discussed difficulty finding purpose or meaning outside of their career and, as a result, indicated decreased satisfaction with their civilian role. These perspectives are consistent with the results from previous studies (Ahern et al., 2015; Orazem et al., 2017; Robertson & Brott, 2013), which found participants struggled to find the same purpose and sense of worth within their civilian roles as they had in their military one. If an individual in the military develops an identity solely dependent upon military status and performance, as many in this study did, it can be difficult to establish a purpose and worth outside of the military.



### **Stage 3 & 4 Summary**

In stage 3 of this study, the quantitative and qualitative data analyses were merged through the use of a side-by-side comparison table. Merging of these datasets provided support for the similarities and differences former athletes and military veterans experienced during their career transition. Interpretation consisted of an in-depth explanation of items in the side-by-side comparison table (Table 6.1) and incorporated relevant literature into the discussion. The merged results further strengthened the benefit of utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to understand the career transition experiences of both participant groups.

This chapter outlined the findings of this study. Stage 1, quantitative results indicated few statistically significant differences between athlete and military participants on the outcome measures. The Stage 2 quantitative analysis revealed similarities in the described transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans. Stages 3 and 4 merged the data and provided an interpretation that furthers the understanding of how transitioning athletes and military veterans are similar and different in their experiences. The final chapter will provide an overview of the study, a discussion of the implications of these merged results from a theoretical and practical perspective, as well as limitations, future study recommendations, and conclusions.

## CHAPTER VII

### FINAL DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the findings from the merged data of this study. The final chapter provides a conclusive evaluation the findings and discusses identified implications and practical applications, followed by recommendations. Limitations to the study and direction for future research are also addressed.

#### **Study Overview**

Sport and exercise psychology practitioners work with military service members to enhance performance prior to and during active duty but have no clear role during military career exits. To determine SEP practitioner preparedness to address military to veteran transition needs, similarities and differences between transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans is necessary. Doing so determines whether or not SEP practitioners are equipped to assist transitioning veterans in the same capacity they assist transitioning athletes.

A mixed methods approach, known as a convergent parallel design, was used to address this study's purpose. This design equally prioritized both quantitative and qualitative data, which complemented one another to provide a holistic view of the transition experiences of both athletes and military veterans. A pragmatic worldview guided this study. Assumptions of pragmatism were appropriate to guide this study's merging of two separate methodologies into a more comprehensive understanding of the transition experiences of former collegiate athletes and military veterans. Three research questions guided this study (i.e., a quantitative, qualitative, and mixed question): 1) How do transitioning athletes and military veterans compare in regard to perceived physical

and mental health? 2) How do the experiences of transitioning athletes compare to those of transitioning military veterans? and 3) What is the relationship between perceived physical and mental health and the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans? The following three aims addressed the study's research questions across 4 stages: 1) Compare perceived satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition barriers and resources, and mental health of former athletes and military veterans who have transitioned or are currently transitioning out of their careers within the past 24 months (Stage 1), 2) compare the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans (Stage 2), and 3) determine the relationship between satisfaction with life, quality of life, transition resources and barriers, mental health status, and the described transition experiences between former athletes and military veterans (Stages 3 & 4).

The first research question was addressed through quantitative methodology. In order to determine how transitioning athletes and military veterans compare on perceived physical and mental health, the following outcome measures were employed: the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), the World Health Organization's abbreviated quality of life measure (WHOQOL-BREF), the Career Transition Inventory (CTI), and the Patient Health Questionnaire Depression Scale (PHQ-8). Fishers exact and Chi-square tests were conducted to determine a difference between the distribution of demographic characteristics for athlete and military veteran participants. Significant results from these tests prompted a series of factorial ANOVAs to determine an interaction between a participant's career type and a specific demographic characteristic. When there was not a significant interaction, two-sample t-tests were calculated to compare and determine differences on the outcome measures. Athlete and military

participants scored similarly on each outcome measure or measure domain. Veteran participants had lower physical health (WHOQOL-BREF) and social relationship (WHOQOL-BREF) domain scores, but better career transition control (CTI) scores than athletes. Correlations were also calculated to determine relationships between the scores calculated for each outcome measure. After correlations were calculated, the Fishers Z Transformation was conducted to identify any significant differences between correlations for athletes and military veterans. This transformation analysis revealed a small number of correlations that were statistically and significantly different between athletes and military veterans. Results from the quantitative analysis on the outcome measures of this study indicate transitioning athletes and military veterans are relatively similar in regard to perceived physical and mental health.

The second research question was addressed through qualitative methodology. To determine how the career transition experiences of athletes and military veterans compare, participants engaged in a single semi-structured interview. Interview questions were developed to elicit in-depth depictions of each participant's transition experience. Four themes emerged from analysis: 1) the necessity of preparation for the transition process, 2) factors impacting the career transition process, 3) transitioning resulted in the loss of structure, and 4) establishing oneself outside of former career. Member reflection results indicated relatively strong agreement with the study themes and provided some validity to the qualitative results. The qualitative analysis revealed substantial overlap and relatively few differences between the described transition experiences of athlete and military veteran participants.

Merging the quantitative and qualitative data analyses addressed the third research question: a side-by-side comparison strategy compared quantitative and qualitative data outcomes. Combining the quantitative and qualitative datasets created a comprehensive view regarding the similarities and differences former athletes and military veterans experienced during their transition process. Overall, this study's quantitative and qualitative results independently and collectively revealed several ways in which former athletes and military veterans had similar career exit transition experiences.

The merged results of this study provide a comprehensive view of transitioning athletes and military veterans. The following section discusses ways in which the results of this study have theoretical and practical implications on the field of sport and exercise psychology. These implications are applicable to both transitioning athletes and military veterans. Theoretical implications focus on modifications to The Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Retirement among Athletes. Practical implications focus on modifications to athlete life skills programs.

### **Suggested Modifications to the Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Retirement among Athletes**

The conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes from Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) is the most frequently utilized theoretical model of transition within the sport literature. The model (Figure 7.1) includes five stages: 1) causes of career termination; 2) factors related to adaptation to career transition; 3) available resources for adaptation to career transition; 4) quality of career transition; and 5) intervention for career transition. Results from this study largely support the ability of the model to capture variables that impact an athletic career transition. Additionally, the conceptual

model of adaptation to career transition appropriately captured factors impacting a military career transition. In the following section, each stage of the model is examined and suggestions for modification are provided based on the results from this study and previous literature. These suggested modifications are for improved applicability to transitioning athletes and also transitioning veterans. Modifications within the model are shaded in gray and illustrated in Figure 7.2.

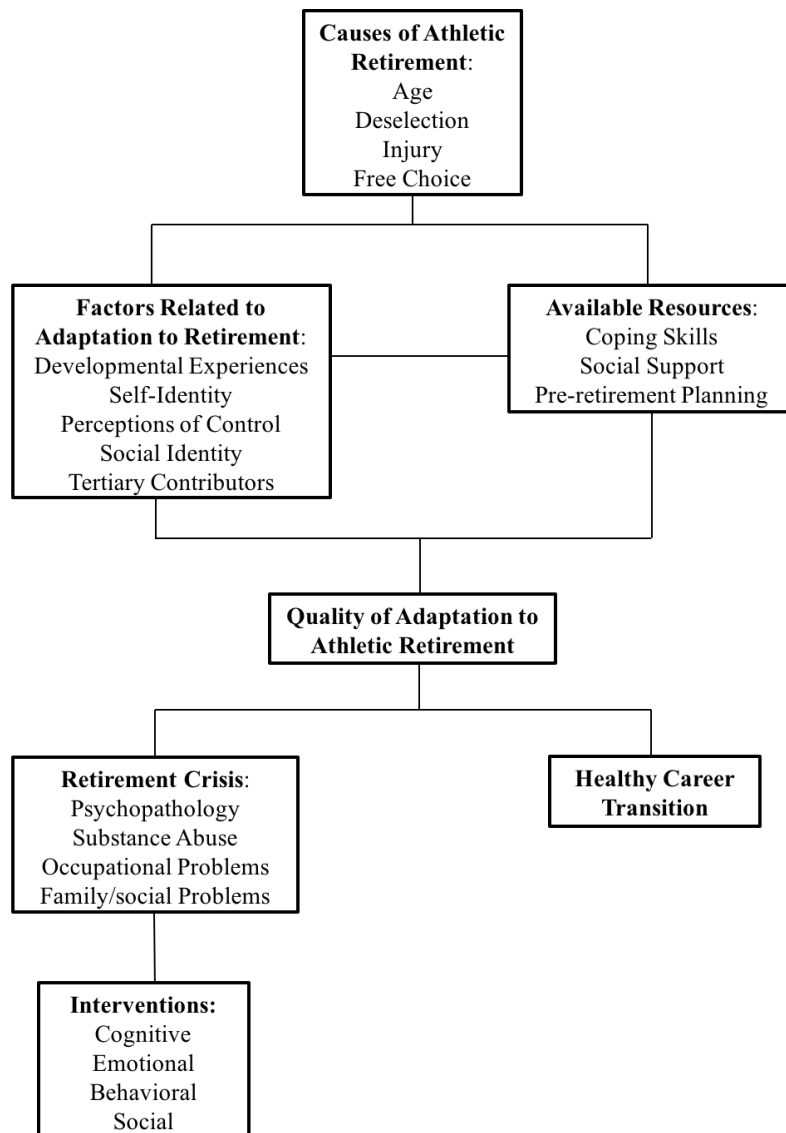


Figure 7.1. A Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Retirement among Athletes, Taylor, J., & Ogilvie, B. C. (1994). *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 6(1), 1-20.

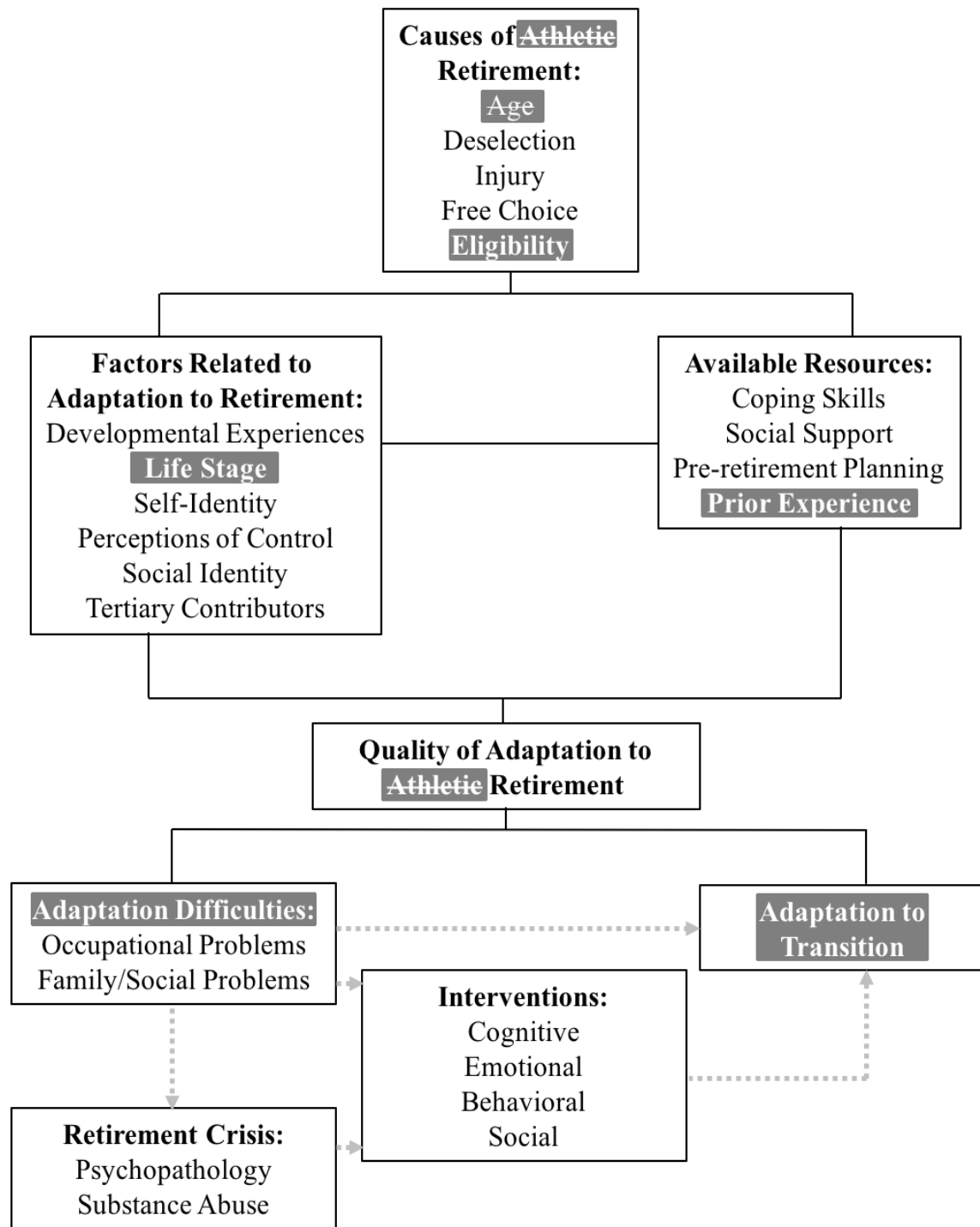


Figure 7.2. Modified Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Retirement. Adapted from Taylor, J., & Ogilvie, B. C. (1994). *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 6(1), 1-20.

## **Causes of Termination**

While the causes of termination were not explored in great depth in this study, participants were asked to state their reason for leaving their previous career. Free choice was the only category explicitly represented by participant responses; many veteran participants chose not to reenlist, which is represented in the conceptual model as free choice. Even though the current study did not closely examine the other factors of retirement, previous literature has established the impact of deselection and injury. Deselection is a process of only selecting athletes capable of progressing to higher levels of competition and eliminating those who do not meet certain performance criteria. This could also apply to veterans. Previous studies have established how this impacts the transition process for athletes (e.g., Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). Although it is not well established in the current study, previous research has also demonstrated the impact of injury on retirement from an athletic or military career (e.g., Brewer et al., 1993; Murphy, 1995; Wands, 2013). Although not prevalent among this study's participants, deselection and injury remain a relevant part of the conceptual model of adaptation.

**Removing Age and Adding Eligibility.** Chronological age is another listed cause of retirement in the original model. Age cannot be a standalone cause of retirement as it directly coincides with either deselection or free choice. As such, it is not fitting as an independent cause of retirement and should be removed from the model. In addition to this modification, eligibility should be an added cause of retirement. Nearly all of the athletes in this study indicated their transition was initiated by the loss of eligibility to compete. According to Schlossberg's model of adaptation to transition (1981), external



sources of control (e.g., organizational policies regarding eligibility) make an individual feel as though they lack control over their transition process. Athlete participants presented lower scores of control when compared to military participants. This was likely attributed to the fact that most athletes were in the transition process due to collegiate athletic policies on eligibility and, as such, made participants feel as though they had no control of the transition. Previous research has also demonstrated how the transition process is negatively impacted if an athlete does not feel in control (Cummins & O'Boyle, 2015; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008; Willard & Lavalley, 2016). Therefore, there are important considerations surrounding the impact on athletes who are no longer eligible to compete.

Regardless of these differences, if the conceptual model of adaptation to retirement is to be applied to athletes at all levels of competition, and even military participants, it is necessary to include eligibility as a cause of retirement.

### **Factors Related to Adaptation to Retirement**

The second stage of the conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes establishes five factors related to an individual's adaptation: developmental experiences, self-identity, perceptions of control, social identity, and tertiary contributors. Given the results of this study and previous research, the factors included in the original model remain relevant to the career transition experiences of athletes and military veterans.

The variables of identity and perception of control were established as common aspects of theoretical models used within the athlete and military career transition literature. Identity was specifically discussed among this study's qualitative participants.

Some athlete and military participants explained they found it difficult to establish an identity that was not connected to their former career. Participants also revealed they were not able to frequently engage in activities outside of their career. This lack of engagement in extracurricular activities likely prevented individuals from establishing an identity that was not attached to athletics or the military. This is supported by previous research, which has demonstrated how establishing a narrow identity can become detrimental to individuals who are transitioning out of an athletic (e.g., Botterill, 1981; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008) or military (e.g., Ahern et al., 2015; Orazem et al., 2017) career.

Control of the transition was perceived differently between athletes and veterans; military participants perceived greater control over the transition process. Military participants likely scored higher on the factor of control due to their respective branch's transition assistance program. Also, as it was evident in this study, service members are more likely to choose when they exit the military as opposed to "aging out" or becoming ineligible, which is more likely to be the experience of an athlete. As discussed in the previous stage of the model (causes of retirement), most athletes indicated eligibility loss as the cause of their transition out of sports. This is an external source of change, which may have led to athletes perceiving lower control of the transition process. Previous athlete-career transition research has demonstrated that the lack of control of the transition has a negative effect on the process (Cummins & O'Boyle, 2015; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008; Willard & Lavalley, 2016).

**Addition of Life Stages.** One of the factors listed in the second stage of the model is "developmental experiences." Developmental experiences are defined to include

events that have occurred since the inception of an individual's athletic career (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). These experiences are thought to contribute to the development of self-perceptions and interpersonal skills that can influence the nature of an athlete's adaptation to retirement. While developmental experiences have been established in the literature for transitioning athletes (e.g., Pepitas & Champagne, 2000), it is not an appropriate factor for transitioning veterans. Individuals transitioning out of the military are exiting a career that was initiated at a later age and, therefore, a developmental experiences factor is not necessary for consideration in a military career transition. Aside from the association of this factor with military veterans, a focus solely on developmental experiences does not give consideration to the life stages of athletes. Life stages may identify other aspects of development that play a role in the transition process. As a result, the addition of a "life stages" factor is recommended.

Fishers exact and Chi-square tests indicated significant differences between athlete and military participants in regard to the distribution of demographic characteristics (age, gender, employment, and marital status). While the series of factorial ANOVAs did not detect significant interactions between career type and these demographics for each of the quantitative outcomes, it is important to note power of these results were limited by the small sample size. Therefore, these demographic characteristics may in fact play a larger role in the transition process than can be detected with this study's sample. Additionally, results of the qualitative stage indicated differences in the transition process between athletes and veterans that may be related to these demographic characteristics. Considering these differences between athlete and military participants, it is necessary to consider an alternative to the factor of

“developmental experiences” that will better capture what impacts the transition process for these individuals.

One suggestion is to incorporate Erikson’s life stages alongside the “developmental experiences” factor. Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development (1998) consists of eight stages of development, which address a psychosocial crisis and, if an individual is successful at that particular stage, the acquisition of a stage-specific virtue. Based on age, all of the athlete participants in this study were within Erikson’s sixth stage of development, which is considered the life period of young adulthood. The psychosocial crisis in this stage of development is intimacy versus isolation and the virtue to be acquired is love. Unsurprisingly, the focus of this stage is establishing committed relationships. Based on age, most military participants are also included in this stage. However, several other military participants were considered to have fully moved into adulthood and are in the seventh stage of development. The psychosocial crisis within the seventh stage is generativity versus stagnation and the virtue to be acquired is care. Within this stage of development, individuals are beginning to settle down in relationships and are developing a commitment to care for others.

The key differences between athlete and military veterans in this study seemed to be mostly captured by the fact that individuals may be spanning two different stages of adulthood (i.e., stages six and seven of Erikson’s theory). For instance, one of the differences between athletes and veterans in the qualitative stage was the concern of financial stability. This was the most worrisome part of the transition for majority of military participants and only a couple athlete participants. Several veterans also expressed concern for supporting their family during the transition. Additionally, one of

the outcome differences in the quantitative stage of the study was military participants' lower scores on the environment domain. A feature of this domain is financial resources. Lower environmental scores are likely connected to financial stability concerns presented by the qualitative participants. The concept of caring for others is represented by Erikson's (1998) seventh stage of adulthood. As such, it seems as though military participants are operating within the adulthood stage and are concerned with the needs of others more so than athlete participants. It is also important to note the ANOVA interaction between career type and marital status, which indicated marital status may influence an individual's perceived control of the transition process. Married military participants scored the highest on the factor of control. While this interaction was disregarded due to sample size concerns and effect sizes, a larger sample size may reveal a more thorough understanding of the effect marital status has on an individual's perceived control of the transition.

Given the fit of Erikson's life stage development (1998) with the results of the current study, the addition of a "Life Stages" factor is appropriate to account for the specific needs and experiences of transitioning athletes and veterans.

**Expanding Definition of Tertiary Contributors.** The last factor related to retirement adaptation is "Tertiary Contributors." Tertiary contributors are personal, social, and environmental variables that may influence an athlete's adaptation to retirement (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). These types of factors were explored in the current study. For instance, the quality of life measure included domains that are directly related to the definition of tertiary contributors. In Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) description of this factor, they identify variables such as socioeconomic status, minority status, and marital

status. However, they do not identify organizational aspects as an environmental variable that may contribute to the transition process. Participants in the current study discussed the influence their organization had on the transition (e.g., their former position, the structure of the organization, leadership). Previous research has also established how a perceived lack of support from career institutions can exacerbate feelings of alienation (Wands, 2013). While “tertiary contributors” certainly impact a career transition, the model would be improved by expanding on the understanding of what potential transition variables may be captured by this factor.

### **Available Resources**

The resources of coping skills, social support, and pre-retirement planning listed in the current model (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) were also captured in this study. Social support was an especially relevant resource for this study’s participants and is prevalent within much of the athlete- and military-career transition literature (Robertson, 2013; Stambulova et al., 2009; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). The variables of coping and planning were present in the current study; however, they were commonly presented as synonymous among participants. In other words, most participants viewed preparation for the transition as their method of coping. This is similar to another study, which presented preparation for the transition alongside the concept of coping (Surujlal & van Zyl, 2014). Additionally, research has shown that athletes who are more prepared for the transition and high in coping resources will be likely to experience less stress than athletes with few coping skills (Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000). Given these results, it may be necessary to consider whether coping and pre-retirement planning can be combined into one resource.

**Including Prior Experiences.** An aspect of Schlossberg's model of adaptation to transition (1981) and the 4-S model (1995) is the influence of prior experiences. These experiences can better prepare an individual for their transition because they are more aware of what to expect. Within Taylor and Ogilvie's model of adaptation (1994), there is not a variable that captures the impact of previous experience on the transition process. For the most part, participants in this study acknowledged the current transition as unique and were unable to compare it to other experiences. Participants emphasized the importance of planning for the transition largely due to the fact that they encountered situations throughout the process they were not prepared for due to their lack of experience. Given the influence this had on participants in this study and their ability to prepare accordingly for the transition, it is an important resource for guiding the transition process. It is recommended that "previous experience" be included as an available resource in the conceptual model of adaptation to retirement.

### **Quality of Career Transition**

This stage of the model is the point of retiring that an athlete's reaction to the career transition will become evident. To better address the progression of transition adaptation, it was necessary to adjust the placement of retirement crisis and interventions. Previous research has established how a difficult transition can be detrimental to the health and well-being of transitioning athletes and military veterans (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Kline et al., 2011; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). However, other studies (Coakley, 1983) and the results of this study have illustrated that even when difficulties were experienced during the transition, individuals still successfully adapted. As such, the

quality of transition and intervention stage presented in the original model have been rearranged to better represent how an individual navigates the transition process.

**Adjusting “Retirement Crisis.”** Participants in this study presented a variety of ways in which they struggled with their transition. However, when asked whether or not they felt as though they had successfully transitioned, each participant indicated they had. As such, it seems inappropriate to suggest these individuals entered into a crisis stage prior to successfully transitioning out of their career. The use of the term crisis as the only alternative to a healthy career transition limits an individual’s ability to navigate any difficulty with the transition process. In the original model, if an individual experienced anything other than a healthy career transition, the conceptual model of adaptation makes it seem as though they have entered into a crisis stage. Transition models within the sport literature were developed to shift away from previous theoretical models that suggested the transition out of sport was an entirely negative event (Coakley, 1983; Torregrosa et al., 2004) that caused distress. If the goal of transition models is to move away from negative perceptions of transitioning, the title of “Retirement Crisis” serves as a misrepresentation to this model. A suggested alternative, as seen in Figure 7.2, is “Adaptation Difficulties” and this new category contains “Occupational Problems” and “Family/Social Problems” as these are relevant to this new category. Arrows were added to allow an individual to move from “Adaptation Difficulties” into a successful adaptation or into an intervention, if one is needed. The addition of arrows also allows an individual to move from “Retirement Crisis” into an intervention and then the title of “Healthy Career Transition” was replaced with “Adaptation to Transition.” This wording better represents the experiences of transitioning athletes and military veterans. It can be



argued that someone who experiences psychopathology or develops a substance abuse has likely not had a “healthy” career transition. Therefore, changing the wording to simply indicate that an individual has transitioned is more accurate.

It is important to note that the concept of a retirement crisis still remains relevant as some individuals may in fact experience a difficult and stressful transition process. As such, the crisis outcomes of psychopathology and substance abuse listed under retirement crisis in the original model should remain in order to capture the issues of individuals who do in fact reach a crisis stage. With the suggested modifications, “Retirement Crisis” is now situated under “Adaptation Difficulties” to capture the experiences of individuals who may continue to struggle with their transition and develop more serious issues. Arrows have been included demonstrate the movement of individuals from “Retirement Crisis” into an intervention and then eventually reaching a stage of having adapted to their transition.

Results of this study and previous literature demonstrate the conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes to be a fitting model for both athletes and veterans. Suggested modifications make the model more applicable for individuals transitioning out of athletics or the military. SEP practitioners and researchers should consider these modifications when examining the transition experience of either group.

### **Practical Recommendations for Sport and Exercise Psychology Practitioners in Assisting Transitioning Athletes and Veterans**

SEP practitioners prepare athletes for life after sport by helping them develop skills related to social, educational, and work-related functioning (Anderson & Morris, 2000). To this end SEP practitioners work with athletes to identify other areas of interest

outside of sport, encourage athletes to seek out resources and avenues to obtain a job in this field of interest, and develop generic social and interpersonal skills. Results from this study highlight specific areas of need and concern among transitioning athletes. Given the similar transition experiences of athletes and veterans in this study, these needs and concerns are also relevant to those exiting the military. As such, the following section discusses several recommendations for SEP practitioners, which are based on this study's results and previous literature. These recommendations are necessary for SEP practitioners consider if they are to effectively facilitate the transition process of both athletes and military veterans.

### **Role of Organization**

Participants insisted their career organization should play a vital role in transition preparations. However, many felt their organization did not provide enough support or guidance throughout the process. As a result, participants expressed a desire and expectation for their career organization to be of more assistance in the transition process for future athletes or veterans. This is consistent with previous research of transitioning athletes (Martin, Fogarty, & Albion, 2014) and military veterans (Ahern et al., 2015), which concluded organizations should work with these individuals to acquire other interests and develop a more diverse identity. It is also important to establish what part of the organization assumes the role of preparing individuals for their transition. Athlete participants in this study felt the responsibility of preparing individuals for the transition should be assumed by their coaches and the athletic department. However, previous studies (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993) have demonstrated that coaches understand the benefits of preparation efforts, but consider them to be the responsibility of the athlete. Given

some contradiction regarding the organization's role in assisting transitioning individuals, is important for the larger organization (i.e., the athletic association that oversees activities at each university) to establish which individuals are responsible for transition assistance. It will also be important for SEP practitioners to establish a working relationship with any organizational personnel who are considered responsible for transitioning athletes or veterans.

Given that military personnel who are nearing the end of their career are provided with transition assistance programs, the responsibility is on the individual to fully utilize this resource. However, veteran participants discussed their leadership's negative view of personnel leaving their military career and how this impacted their ability to access these transition programs. Negative leadership led participants to suggest that leadership be better trained to assist personnel and to be more understanding of their transition preparations. SEP practitioners should be aware of who is established as the primary resource for transition preparations within the respective organization. Practitioners can then direct their athlete or military clients to the proper individuals to ensure resources are fully utilized. Transitioning athletes and veterans will also perceive a greater level of support from their organization, which benefits the transition process.

### **Transferable Skills**

Transferable skills, or life skills, are those that are potentially transferable to any field or career (Bolles, 1996). These skills tend to be content and context free and contain little suggestion of their specific or intended application (Wiant, 1977). This flexibility allows for skills to be applied to a variety of situations. Examples of transferable skills include, but are not limited to, problem-solving skills, organizational skills, dedication

and perseverance, or adaptation/flexibility. The transferability of skills when exiting an athletic career was a concern expressed among athletes and military veterans in this study and has been established as a concern among these groups in previous literature (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Swain, 1991). As such, it is important these life skill programs work with transitioning individuals to establish what skills have been acquired during their former career that can be applied elsewhere. This will increase an individual's confidence in and satisfaction with the transition process. Results from the current study also indicated military participants struggled to establish the same level of job satisfaction in a career outside of the military. Therefore, it is important to also establish what aspects of a veteran's career provided satisfaction and work to establish these same factors outside of the military.

### **Establishing Structure**

While some participants expressed a sense of freedom from their former career organization, others struggled to establish structure without the support of their athletic department or the military. Considering some individuals benefited from the freedom of structure, it will be important for those working with transitioning athletes or veterans to consider personal preferences as they prepare for their transition (Moos, 2002).

Individuals who desire to remain structured may need guidance on how to establish a similar lifestyle outside of their former career organization. These individuals may need assistance with time management and goal setting, which could be used to keep individuals structured in their day-to-day activities.

## **Identifying a Social Support Network**

Social support was a dominating aspect of the transition process for the participants in this study. It is also well-established in the literature as a significant contributor to the transition process for both athletes and military veterans (e.g., Robertson, 2013; Schlossberg, 1981; Stambulova et al., 2009; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Considering those transitioning out of an athletic or military career benefit from their social support network, it is important for those working with transitioning individuals to establish who comprises their support system and how to access these individuals, prior to exiting their career.

## **Financial Counseling**

Financial concerns were prevalent among both athlete and veteran participants in this study. However, the concern was noticeably greater in military veterans. If an individual is distracted by financial issues, they will not be able to fully focus on adapting to the transition (Robertson, 2013). While SEP practitioners may not be qualified to address financial aspects of the transition process, it is important that they recognize this as a potential stressor. Practitioners can also serve as a source of referral and should connect individuals with these concerns with a professional who is qualified to provide this advice to transitioning athletes and veterans.

Life skill programs are commonly utilized to prepare athletes for the transition out of their sport. Given the results of this study, SEP practitioners should be aware of the following when working with transitioning athletes: establishing what the role of the organization is in the process and who is responsible, identifying transferable skills, establishing structure outside of sport, identifying a social support network, and assisting

with financial counseling. These factors are also relevant for transitioning military veterans and can be further adapted to meet their needs.

Life skill programs are a common intervention strategy to prepare athletes for careers outside of sport. Results from this study and a further examination of aspects of these programs indicate it is an appropriate intervention to prepare veterans for their transition process. Considering SEP practitioners already have the skills necessary to conduct a life skill intervention, it can be concluded they are adequately prepared to work with transitioning military veterans.

### **Limitations**

Although these findings contribute to the body of current literature regarding the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans, this study has several limitations. The quantitative portion of the study was primarily limited by the low power associated with the small sample size. Participants also represented a narrow range of ethnicity. For this reason, caution should be given to generalizing these findings to the broader community of transitioning athletes and military veterans. A larger, more diverse sample would have led to greater generalizability and a greater representation of all collegiate athletes and military service members. Additionally, the athlete participants in the qualitative portion of the study were obtained by convenience sampling due to low participation and interest in engaging in a qualitative interview.

This study captured a participant's age through categorical options. This limited the ability of the analysis to thoroughly examine the influence of age on the various outcome measures. Future studies should include a participant's actual age rather than age range categories to better determine the influence of age on the transition process.

While military participants in this study represented each branch of the US armed forces (i.e., the number of participants representing each branch is comparable to the total population of service members in each branch), athlete participants were less diverse. Despite efforts to recruit former athletes at a variety of competitive levels, such as professional or Olympic, only collegiate athletes participated. As such, caution should be taken if generalizing these findings beyond those of transitioning collegiate athletes. Future studies should include larger samples of athletes at various levels of competition. This would provide an understanding of how certain competitive levels compare to transitioning military veterans. It would also provide a greater variety of life stages represented among athlete participants. This would strengthen the comparisons between transitioning athletes and military veterans in various life stages.

For participants to be eligible for this study, they must have been within 24 months of their career exit. This was done for memory recall purposes (Tourangeau, 1999). However, individuals outside this range may express a different set of perspectives due to experiences encountered at certain time points of the transition process. Expanding the time participants engage in the study would provide a better understanding of what athletes and military veterans experience at each stage of their transition process. Additionally, retrospective self-report data, even within a 24-month timespan, are still at risk of faulty recall. Self-reported outcomes, as opposed to external observation or objective reporting, can also be problematic due to bias. As such, responses may have been influenced by factors not examined in this study. Collecting data observationally and more closely to the time when events occur in the transition process assures fewer issues with memory recall and bias.

The use of telephone interviews was another limitation of this study. Telephone interviews can interfere with rapport development and the ability of the researcher to probe responses. Considering interviews were not face-to-face, the researcher was unable to detect and react to a participant's non-verbal behaviors. However, phone interviews allowed for recruitment across a wide geographical area. Future studies should consider face-to-face or Skype interviews to allow for rapport development, detection of nonverbal cues, and provides an easier channel to use silence to probe.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Considering the similar transition experiences of athletes and military veterans, the next step of this research is to continue to identify interventions used to effectively transition athletes out of their sport. These interventions should then be reviewed to determine what adaptations are necessary to best meet the needs of transitioning military personnel. SEP practitioners should also be interviewed to clarify their approaches to assisting transitioning athletes. Results from this study can be used to inform how athlete focused interventions should be adapted for individuals transitioning out of the military. Based on aspects of the transition found to be difficult for military veterans in this study, particular attention should be paid to transitioning concerns regarding loss of structure, financial stability, and job satisfaction within a new civilian role. Specifying and modifying intervention aspects to be more applicable to veterans could also facilitate a pre-implementation study of SEP interventions within a Veterans Affairs setting.

Individuals recruited for this study had already begun the transition process and were within 24 months of its initiation. A longitudinal study following athlete and military participants throughout their transition process (i.e., pre-transition, mid-



transition, post-transition) would allow researchers to better understand what individuals experience and require at different stages of the process. This would also provide a better understanding of what athletes and military veterans independently experience at each stage of the process, rather than establishing a general overview of their experiences within 2 years.

Future research would also benefit from examining other factors associated with the transition process, not specifically explored in this study. For instance, leadership was not exclusively investigated in this study, yet military participants had a tendency to present negative perceptions of their leader's roles in the transition process. On the other hand, athlete participants presented a more positive view of their leadership (i.e., their coaching staff). Further exploring the impact of leadership on the transition process of both athletes and military veterans would allow for a more in-depth understanding and comparison of the role athletic and military leaders play throughout the transition process. Additionally, this would allow researchers to better understand how to develop and present transition interventions to athletic and military leadership. Leadership is just one example of a factor not extensively examined in this study. Other factors deserving consideration include socioeconomic status or the specific institutional supports for individuals transitioning out of either career organization. Continuing to expand on this knowledge and understanding will have a positive impact of the transition experiences of both athletes and military veterans.

## **Conclusion**

Prior to this study, research had not yet determined what role sport and exercise psychology may have in assisting individuals exiting a military career. This study aimed

to do so by being the first to directly compare the transition experiences of athletes and military veterans. In order to determine sport and exercise psychology practitioner preparedness to address military to veteran transition needs, it was necessary to first establish similarities and differences between transition experiences of former athletes and military veterans. Results from merging both quantitative and qualitative datasets revealed a number of similarities in the career exit transition experiences of these two groups. The list of variables explored in this study does not encompass all of those associated with a career exit. However, it is extensive enough to conclude transitioning athletes and military veterans encounter numerous similarities in their respective transition processes. Based on the results of this study, modifications to a commonly used theoretical model were suggested. Additionally, several considerations were given for the use of athlete life skill programs for preparing athletes and military veterans for their transition. Similar transition experiences between former athletes and military veterans indicate sport and exercise psychology practitioners may be qualified to effectively assist transitioning veterans in the same capacity they assist transitioning athletes.

## APPENDIX A

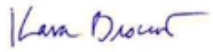
### IRB Letter of Approval



#### INDIANA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH  
Office of Research Compliance

**To:** Niki Munk  
HEALTH/REHABILITATION SCIENCES  
  
Sarah Shue  
HEALTH/REHABILITATION SCIENCES

**From:**   
  
Human Subjects Office  
Office of Research Compliance – Indiana University

**Date:** June 06, 2017

**RE:** NOTICE OF EXEMPTION - NEW PROTOCOL

Protocol Title: Exploring the Impact of Career Transition on Athletes and Military Personnel: A Mixed Methods Study  
Study #: 1705639943  
Funding Agency/Sponsor: None  
Status: Exemption Granted | Exempt

**Study Approval Date:** June 06, 2017

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The Indiana University Institutional Review Board (IRB) EXE000001 | Exempt recently reviewed the above-referenced protocol. In compliance with (as applicable) 45 CFR 46.109 (d) and IU Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Research Involving Human Subjects, this letter serves as written notification of the IRB's determination.

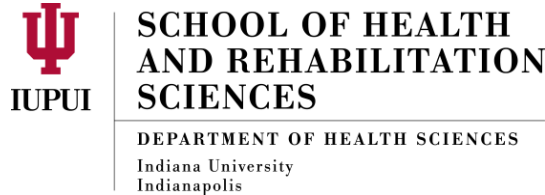
**Under 45 CFR 46.101(b) and the SOPs, as applicable, the study is accepted as Exempt (2) Category 2: Surveys/Interviews/Standardized Educational Tests/Observation of Public Behavior Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior if: i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or ii) any disclosure of the human subjects responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects financial standing, employability or reputation, with the following determinations:**

Acceptance of this study is based on your agreement to abide by the policies and procedures of the Indiana University Human Research Protection Program and does not replace any other approvals that may be required. Relevant policies and procedures governing Human Subjects Research can be found at: [http://researchcompliance.iu.edu/hso/hs\\_guidance.html](http://researchcompliance.iu.edu/hso/hs_guidance.html).

The Exempt determination is valid indefinitely. Substantive changes to approved exempt research must be requested and approved prior to their initiation. Investigators may request proposed changes by submitting an amendment through the KC IRB system. The changes are reviewed to ensure that they do not affect the exempt status of the research. Please check with the Human Subjects Office to determine if any additional review may be needed.

## APPENDIX B

### Recruitment Flyer



## **Are you a former athlete or a former member of the United States Armed Forces? Have you left your career in the last 24 months?**

Researchers at Indiana University are interested in your experience with transitioning out of your respective career. Niki Munk, PhD, and Sarah Shue, PhD(c), with the Department of Health Sciences are conducting a study to better understand the experiences of athletes and military personnel who are currently, or have recently, transitioned out of their career.

### **Who can participate?**

- Individuals must be 18 years or older
- Former collegiate athletes
- Former professional athletes
- Former military personnel from all branches of the US Armed Forces, all ranks
- Must be within 24 months from leaving your athletic or military career
- Cannot be pursuing another career in your respective field

### **What does participation involve?**

- Completion of an online survey - between 20 to 30 minutes

**Access Survey here:** <https://redcap.uits.iu.edu/surveys/?s=E4RAFH3LD>

**\*\*Those who complete a survey will be entered to win a \$25 gift card!\*\***

- In the survey, participants will also be asked to participate in an interview. Interested individuals will be contacted at a later date to schedule a date and time.

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**If you would like more information or have any questions,  
please contact Sarah Shue at [smcgary@uemail.iu.edu](mailto:smcgary@uemail.iu.edu)**

This study has been approved by Indiana University Institutional Review Board, Protocol #1705639943

## APPENDIX C

### REDCap Survey – Stage 1

Confidential

Page 1 of 15

#### Transition Questionnaire

Please complete the survey below.

Thank you!

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study! This study is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation by a student at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI; IRB protocol # 1705639943). The purpose is to better understand the transition experiences of transitioning athletes and military personnel. In this survey you will be asked questions regarding aspects of your career transition experience, such as satisfaction with life, resources utilized, quality of life, and other health-related questions. While there are no anticipated risks in completing the survey, participation is completely voluntary and you may exit the survey at any time if no longer want to participate. Please review the inclusion criteria for participation: 1) 18 years or older, 2) former athlete (collegiate or professional), OR 3) former military personnel, 4) left respective career within the past 24 months, and 5) are not seeking another career in your respective career field. If you have any questions prior to participation in this study, please contact me at [smcgary@umail.iu.edu](mailto:smcgary@umail.iu.edu). Please continue if you are still interested in participating.

\*\*\*Please remember to answer all questions in the survey and include your email at the end to be considered for entry into the gift card drawing!\*\*\*

Please indicate which career type you are withdrawing from:

- ☐ Athletic
- ☐ Military

Which sport did you participate in?

- ☐ Baseball
- ☐ Basketball
- ☐ Bowling
- ☐ Boxing
- ☐ Cross Country
- ☐ Fencing
- ☐ Field Hockey
- ☐ Football
- ☐ Golf
- ☐ Gymnastics
- ☐ Hockey
- ☐ Lacrosse
- ☐ Rifle
- ☐ Rowing
- ☐ Skiing
- ☐ Soccer
- ☐ Softball
- ☐ Swimming and Diving
- ☐ Tennis
- ☐ Track and Field
- ☐ Volleyball
- ☐ Water Polo
- ☐ Wrestling
- ☐ Other

If you selected other, please specify which sport you played.

---

How many years did you play your selected sport?

---

What university did you attend?

---

How many months has it been since you've left your athletic career?

---

What was your branch of service?

- ☐ Air Force
- ☐ Army
- ☐ Coast Guard
- ☐ Marine Corps
- ☐ Navy

Which component?

- ☐ Active Duty
- ☐ Reserves
- ☐ National Guard
- ☐ Does not apply
- ☐ Both Active and Reserves

What military operation(s) did you serve in?

---

How many deployments did you serve?

---

Approximately how long were you deployed?

---

(Please list the amount of time for each deployment, if you served more than one.)

What was your rank?

---

How many total years did you serve in the military?

---

How many months has it been since you left your military career?

---

---

What is your age?

- ☐ 18-24 years old
- ☐ 25-34 years old
- ☐ 35-44 years old
- ☐ 45-54 years old
- ☐ 55-64 years old
- ☐ 65-74 years old
- ☐ 75 years or older

Please select your gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer to not answer

Which state do you live in?

- ☐ Alabama
- ☐ Alaska
- ☐ Arizona
- ☐ Arkansas
- ☐ California
- ☐ Colorado
- ☐ Connecticut
- ☐ Delaware
- ☐ Florida
- ☐ Georgia
- ☐ Hawaii
- ☐ Idaho
- ☐ Illinois
- ☐ Indiana
- ☐ Iowa
- ☐ Kansas
- ☐ Kentucky
- ☐ Louisiana
- ☐ Maine
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- ☐ Massachusetts
- ☐ Michigan
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- ☐ Nebraska
- ☐ Nevada
- ☐ New Hampshire
- ☐ New Jersey
- ☐ New Mexico
- ☐ New York
- ☐ North Carolina
- ☐ North Dakota
- ☐ Ohio
- ☐ Oklahoma
- ☐ Oregon
- ☐ Pennsylvania
- ☐ Rhode Island
- ☐ South Carolina
- ☐ South Dakota
- ☐ Tennessee
- ☐ Texas
- ☐ Utah
- ☐ Vermont
- ☐ Virginia
- ☐ Washington
- ☐ West Virginia
- ☐ Wisconsin
- ☐ Wyoming
- ☐ Outside of US

Please specify where you are currently living.

Please specify your ethnicity:

- 
- ☐ White
  - ☐ Hispanic or Latino
  - ☐ Black or African American
  - ☐ Native American or American Indian
  - ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
  - ☐ Other
- 

Other:



What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If you are currently enrolled, highest degree received.)

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school graduate, diploma, or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- ☐ Some college credit
- ☐ Trade/technical/vocational training
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Professional degree
- ☐ Doctorate degree

What is your current employment status?

- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Out of work and looking
- ☐ Out of work but not currently looking
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Unable to work

What is your current occupation?

---

What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single (never married)
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

**Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by selecting the appropriate option on the same line of that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
In most ways my life is close to ideal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The conditions of my life are excellent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**These next statements are designed to assess the resources and barriers you experience in making a career transition. There is a total of 40 statements. Read each item and then indicate to what extent, at this particular point in your life, you agree or disagree with that item. Do this by selected the appropriate option on the same line as the item.**

	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
I believe I am ready to risk some of the security I now have in my current career in order to gain something better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This career transition process may be too complex for me to work through.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel as though I have a driving force within me to work on this career transition right now.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I never have been able to go through career transition easily. I doubt I will this time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you are really calling the shots in your career transition, you are only fooling yourself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in my life are disappointed and resentful that my career transition affects their lives adversely.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career choices affect others and I must take the needs of others into account when making a career transition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Even though there are risks, I think there is a realistic hope of finding a better career choice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The risk of changing careers seems serious to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My effort, creativity, and motivation will lead me to a new career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Read each item and then indicate to what extent, at this particular point in your life, you agree or disagree with that item. Do this by selected the appropriate option on the same line as the item.**

	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
Some would say that this career transition is a risky venture, but the risk doesn't bother me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am hoping that the right career counselor will tell me what I should do with this career transition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People with whom I respect have said they think I can make this career transition successfully.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned about giving up the security of what I am presently doing to make a career transition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The risks of this career transition are high but I am willing to take the chance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't feel that I have the talent to make a career transition that I will feel good about.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This isn't one of those times in my life when I really feel propelled to make a career transition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It seems natural with something as scary as a career transition, I would be preoccupied with worry about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The outcome of this career transition process is really up to those who control the "system".	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Significant people in my life are actively supporting me in this career transition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Read each item and then indicate to what extent, at this particular point in your life, you agree or disagree with that item. Do this by selected the appropriate option on the same line as the item.**

	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
While family and relationship needs are important to me, when it comes to this career transition, I feel I must focus on my own needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't feel much internal "push" to work hard at this career transition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not one of those people who was brought up to believe I could be anything I wanted to be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At this point in my life I really feel the need for more meaning in my work, that need keeps me moving at this process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In dealing with aspects of this career transition, I am unsure whether I can handle it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If my career transition is destined to happen, it will happen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The risks of career transition seem too great given my current resources and the potential pay-off.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is hard for me to juggle this career transition given the responsibilities I feel for people in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Each day I do something on this career transition process, I would say I'm motivated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in my ability to do well in this career transition process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Read each item and then indicate to what extent, at this particular point in your life, you agree or disagree with that item. Do this by selected the appropriate option on the same line as the item.**

	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
I am feeling challenged by this career transition process and this knowledge keeps me motivated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The magnitude of this career transition process is impossible to deal with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It would be awful if this career transition didn't work out right.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Important people in my life (partner, teacher, parents) have said things that led me to believe I should limit my career options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family (partner or friends) are important to me but I can't put too much importance on their desires with regard to this career transition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Even though the solution to this career transition is not readily apparent, I believe I will successfully work through it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The number of unknowns involved in making a career transition bothers me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recent events in my life have given me the shove I needed for this career transition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Luck and chance play the major role in this career transition process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Even though this may not be the best time for other people in my life, I feel the need to go for it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

**The following questions assess how you feel about your quality of life, health, or other areas of your life. If you are unsure about which response to give to a questions, please choose the one that appears most appropriate. We ask that you think about your life in the last two weeks.**

**Please read each of the following questions, assess your feelings, and select the option that gives the best answer for you.**

How would you rate your quality of life?

- ☐ Very poor
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Neither poor nor good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very good

How satisfied are you with your health?

- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Very satisfied

---

**The following questions ask about how much you have experienced certain things in the last two weeks.**

	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	Very much	An extreme amount
To what extent do you feel that physical pain prevents you from doing what you need to do?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How much do you need any medical treatment to function in your daily life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How much do you enjoy life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent do you feel your life to be meaningful?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How well are you able to concentrate?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How safe do you feel in your daily life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How healthy is your physical environment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



---

**The following questions ask about how completely you experience or were able to do certain things in the last two weeks.**

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Mostly	Completely
Do you have enough energy for everyday life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you able to accept your bodily appearance?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you enough money to meet your needs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How available to you is the information that you need in your day-to-day life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent do you have the opportunity for leisure activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How well are you able to get around?

- ☐ Very poor  
☐ Poor  
☐ Neither poor nor good  
☐ Good  
☐ Very good

**The following questions ask you to say how good or satisfied you have felt about various experiences of your life over the last two weeks.**

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
How satisfied are you with your sleep?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with your ability to perform your daily living activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with your capacity for work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with yourself?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with your sex life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with the support you get from your friends?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with the conditions of your living place?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with your access to health services?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with your transport?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following question refers to how often you have felt or experienced certain things in the last two weeks:

How often do you have negative feelings such as blue mood, despair, anxiety, depression?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Quite often
- ☐ Very often
- ☐ Always

**Over the last 2 weeks how often were you bothered by...**

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
little interest or pleasure in doing things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
feeling down, depressed, or hopeless.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
feeling tired or having little energy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
poor appetite or overeating.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
feeling bad about yourself, or that you are a failure, or have let yourself or your family down.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite - being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If someone referred this survey to you, please provide the referral's NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS:

---

If you want to be entered into the gift card drawing, please enter your email:

---

Would you be interested in participating in an interview regarding your career transition experience(s)?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Interviews are anticipated to take approximately 45 minutes and questions will focus on defining your transition, resources and barriers you faced, role changes, etc. Those who complete an interview will receive an Amazon gift card!

Please provide your name:

---

Preferred phone number:

---

Email:

---

Thank you for your interest in engaging in an interview! If selected for participation, you will be contacted via email to schedule an interview time.

Thank you again for participating in this survey! Some survey questions may have evoked negative emotions or feelings. If you find that to be true, we encourage you to discuss this with a trained professional. If you have any questions, please contact me, Sarah Shue, at smcgary@uemail.ju.edu.

## APPENDIX D

### Informed Consent for QUAL Interviews – Stage 2

Exploring the Impact of Career Transition on Athletes and Military Personnel: A Mixed Methods Study (the current study) is part of a doctoral dissertation project with the aim of better understanding the individual and similar experiences of athletes and military personnel who are transitioning out of their respective careers. This study will help determine the potential role that practitioners within the field of sport and exercise psychology may have in the post-deployment, career transition care of military personnel. The aims of this study are to: 1) compare health outcomes of transitioning, or recently transitioned, athletes and military personnel, 2) explore similarities and differences in the transition experiences of athletes and military personnel, and 3) determine the relationship between health outcomes and transition experiences.

Sarah Shue, a doctoral student from Indiana University's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences in Indianapolis, Indiana, will be the main contact for this study and will be conducting the interviews. If you agree to participate you will be among approximately 60 other participants, consisting of both athletes and military personnel. As part of your participation, you will complete an interview that will be conducted with a semi-structured format. Interviews will last between 30-minutes and 1 and a half hours. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis accuracy. Only the research team will have access to these recordings and transcripts and they will be stored on a password-protected computer. Audio recordings will be transcribed verbatim and a pseudonym will be assigned to each interview transcript to protect participant identity. Recordings will be deleted once the transcription process is complete. Transcripts will be kept for approximately 7 years after the study's conclusion for continuing research purposes.

Once all study interviews and analysis are complete, you will be contacted again and asked to review developed data themes by study investigators to ensure your individual responses were accurately reflected by the analysis results.

For participating in this study, you will receive an electronic gift card as compensation for your time spent participating in the study. An email address will be necessary in order to make sure you receive the gift card. However, this information will be kept confidential and will not be attached to your interview recording or transcript in any way.

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study nor are there alternatives to participation other than choosing not to consent. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission to participate at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from study investigators, Indiana University, or any of your professional affiliates.

In order to participate in this study, you must meet and confirm the following self-report criteria:

1. former athlete OR member of the United States military who,
2. has recently transitioned out of your respective year within the past **12 months**, and
3. is not actively seeking another career in your respective field

Ask individuals:

- Do you meet these criteria?
- Do you provide consent to participate?
- Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

## APPENDIX E

### Interview Guide – Stage 2

#### **Defining the transition**

1. What were the circumstances surrounding your withdrawal from your sport/the military?
2. What other transition(s) have you experienced that you would compare this transition out of sport/the military to?
3. What were some of your immediate worries and concerns regarding this transition?
4. How much thought did you give to leaving your athletic/military career prior to it happening?
5. When did you begin to think about leaving your athletic/military career?
6. When does the preparation for transition out of sport/the military begin for most individuals?
7. In your opinion, when should the preparation for life after sport/military begin?

#### **Psychosocial Factors**

8. How did your views, attitudes, and beliefs influence your transition from sports/the military into your current role?
9. What other roles and activities were you involved in during your athletic/military career? Did these help or hurt your transition?
10. What has been the most difficult adjustment that you have had to face since leaving?
11. What has been the biggest change to your lifestyle since leaving your athletic/military career?

#### **Resources**

12. What made the transition process easier?
13. What behaviors do you think positively influenced your transition?
14. What behaviors do you think negatively influenced your transition?
15. What resources should individuals have available to them to aid the transition out of sport/the military?
16. What resources helped you? How did you access these?
17. Who was the most supportive or helpful during your sport-career transition?
18. What did you (or what do you) need after athletics/military to be satisfied?

#### **Career Specific Transitions**

19. How would you describe a successful transition out of sport/the military?
20. What would you say some of the unique challenges are to leaving a(n) athletic/military career?
21. If you had a chance to do it all over again with regard to your career transition, would you do anything differently? If so, what?

#### **Role Change**

22. How would you identify yourself today and how does this differ from when you were in sports/the military?

#### **Adaptation to the Transition**

23. Would you say that you have successfully adapted to this transition? Why or why not?

# APPENDIX F

Table - Stage 1 ANOVA F-Values

Measure	df	F	p	Measure	df	F	p
<b>SWLS</b>				<b>CTI</b>			
Age*Career	1,98	3.41	.068	<i>Control</i>			
Gender*Career	1,100	.505	.479	Age*Career	1,99	.376	.541
Employment*Career	1,100	.463	.498	Gender*Career	1,101	.003	.959
Marital Status*Career	1,100	1.104	.296	Employment*Career	1,101	.085	.771
<b>WHOQOL-BREF</b>				Marital Status*Career	1,101	4.135	.045*
<i>Physical Health</i>				<i>Readiness</i>			
Age*Career	1,100	2.198	.141	Age*Career	1,99	.444	.507
Gender*Career	1,102	.045	.833	Gender*Career	1,101	.872	.353
Employment*Career	1,102	.244	.623	Employment*Career	1,101	.002	.968
Marital Status*Career	1,102	.037	.848	Marital Status*Career	1,101	.240	.625
<i>Psychological Health</i>				<i>Perceived Support</i>			
Age*Career	1,100	2.651	.107	Age*Career	1,99	1.090	.299
Gender*Career	1,102	.067	.796	Gender*Career	1,101	.905	.344
Employment*Career	1,102	.946	.333	Employment*Career	1,101	.278	.599
Marital Status*Career	1,102	.318	.574	Marital Status*Career	1,101	.679	.412
<i>Social Relations</i>				<i>Confidence</i>			
Age*Career	1,100	.453	.502	Age*Career	1,99	1.511	.222
Gender*Career	1,100	.117	.733	Gender*Career	1,101	2.678	.105
Employment*Career	1,100	.006	.937	Employment*Career	1,101	.067	.796
Marital Status*Career	1,100	.002	.962	Marital Status*Career	1,101	.032	.858
<i>Environment</i>				<i>Decision Independence</i>			
Age*Career	1,99	.172	.680	Age*Career	1,99	.392	.533
Gender*Career	1,101	.017	.896	Gender*Career	1,101	.836	.363
Employment*Career	1,101	.003	.954	Employment*Career	1,101	.571	.452
Marital Status*Career	1,101	.352	.554	Marital Status*Career	1,101	.956	.331
				<b>PHQ-8</b>			
				Age*Career	1,98	1.283	.260
				Gender*Career	1,100	.066	.797
				Employment*Career	1,100	.739	.392
				Marital Status*Career	1,100	.495	.483

## APPENDIX G

### Member Reflections Survey

Confidential

Page 1 of 3

#### Career Transition Member Checking Survey\_1

Please complete the survey below.

Thank you!

Thank you for your interview participation in the following research study: Exploring the Impact of Career Transition on Athletes and Military Personnel.

As you may recall from your participation consent, we planned to validate our qualitative analysis by allowing participants to indicate the extent to which themes developed from all the interviews resonate with their experiences. It is not expected that all participants will align 100% with all aspects of the developed themes; but it is expected that each participant will find their experiences and perceptions of their career transition reflected, at least in part, with one or two of the developed themes.

We anticipate this survey will take around 15-20 minutes to complete. In the survey below you will be reviewing themes that have developed from the interview transcripts. There are sliders for each of the themes and you will move the slider to indicate your level of agreement with the themes. After each theme text, there is also a place for you to leave general feedback regarding that specific theme.

Following the five theme related slider questions, we invite you to provide any additional related comments you may like to share.

- 1) Theme #1: Aspects of one's social relationships, personal characteristics, and career impacted the transition.

Participants indicated several factors involved in the success and challenges of their career transition process.

- Family
- Other relationships (e.g., coaches, administrators)
- Remaining connected beneficial; former teammates or peers
- Personal outlook and attitude influential
- Religion
- Gained skills during career, which prepped for next steps
- Positive leadership - assisted with the transition
- Negative leadership - hindered the transition

Completely disagree Completely agree

=====

(Place a mark on the scale above)

- 2) Additional feedback for Theme #1:

\_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Theme #2: Transitioning out of a career equated to the loss of structure.

Structure was viewed as an inherent part of an athletic and military career. Leaving a career in either field meant an individual was no longer part of that structured organization.

- Freedom to make own decisions; pursue own interests and doing things on one's own time
- Wanting to distance self from former career
- Was difficult for some to lose the structure
- Attempting to create structure in other ways (e.g., making checklists or setting goals)
- Importance of finding balance (e.g., remaining physically active)
- Loss of a guaranteed support group
- Outside of structure, hard to find people who understood

Completely disagree Completely agree

\_\_\_\_\_

(Place a mark on the scale above)

- 4) Additional feedback for Theme #2:

- 5) Theme #3: Definition of a successful career transition was individualized.

There were a variety of responses associated with how participants defined a successful career transition. While not everyone indicated they had completely and successfully transitioned out of their respective career, each provided their own personal definition of what it meant to successfully transition out of a career.

- Ability to set and accomplish goals
- Happiness
- Balance
- Finding new purpose and passion
- Giving back to the community
- Remaining connected to peers
- Defining successful transitioning through comparing to peers

Completely disagree Completely agree

\_\_\_\_\_

(Place a mark on the scale above)

- 6) Additional feedback for Theme #3:

\_\_\_\_\_



- 7) Theme #4: Transitioning involved the establishment of a new self-definition.

Participants indicated the process of transitioning out of a career caused some degree of disruption to their identity. The participants who closely defined themselves in association with their athletic or military career continued to struggle with the process of redefining who they are outside of their former career. While it could prove to be difficult at times, there was a general understanding that re-establishing one's identity as a result of a career transition was part of the process.

- Creating a new sense of purpose
- Becoming involved in something else (e.g., coaching, attending college)
- Lack of job satisfaction
- Difficult to establish a new identity

Completely disagree Completely agree

=====

(Place a mark on the scale above)

- 8) Additional feedback for Theme #4:

\_\_\_\_\_

- 9) Theme #5: Participants emphasized the necessity of proper preparation for the transition process.

Preparation for transitioning out of an athletic or military career was deemed essential by participants. Participants implied how important it is for athletes and military personnel to recognize that eventually you are going to get out and so there should always be preparation for the next stage. Preparation for the transition is necessary to avoid unnecessary stress or hardship.

- Never experienced anything similar, so important to not assume you know what's going to happen
- Unaware of how long some things took to process
- Career guidance should be given and taken advantage of
- Transition assistance programs were used; however, difficult to tailor to individual needs
- Talking with someone is important
- Psychological impact; stigma associated with not handling it on your own
- Unable to prep for the culture shock of leaving
- Having to follow up with someone for accountability

Completely disagree Completely agree

=====

(Place a mark on the scale above)

- 10) Additional feedback for Theme #5:

\_\_\_\_\_

- 11) Please regarding the themes and information you have reviewed.

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you again for your participation! If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [smcgary@uimail.iu.edu](mailto:smcgary@uimail.iu.edu)

## APPENDIX H

### Member Reflections Comments

REDCap Member Reflections Feedback		
Member Type	Theme	Comment
ATH	1	The skills I developed during my time as an athlete, helped make my transition significantly.
ATH	2	I think a lot of time this structure was only maintained by punishment or threats of punishment. I think many people transition out because that 'structure' breaks down in the higher ranks. This also, I've noticed, extends to athletics, but in a different way. Better athletes get away with more stuff, in some programs.
ATH	2	Especially with the exercise aspect.
MIL	2	I missed having my entire day be structured.
MIL	2	There was little instruction on how to develop the structure necessary for a successful transition.
ATH	3	Somewhat, but I've found myself actually thinking about career more communally.
MIL	4	I don't feel any different than I did a year ago.
MIL	4	I agree but also think it is dependent on time served and age. Personally I joined late and had already started to learn and define who I was so I had something to go back to.
MIL	4	Military transition did not include clear delineation that a new identity was necessary. It was possibly implied, but the engraining of military mindset possibly hinders the ability to understand that the identity will be lost, and need to be reinvented.
MIL	5	This is a key element that should be thought of prior to transition, but is not really talked about in the military until it is time to transition.

## APPENDIX I

### Athlete Participant Descriptors

Stage 2 Athlete Participant Descriptors – Interview Notes			
	ID	Demographics	Interview Notes
1	A01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Golf</li> <li>• 18 years played, 3 mo. out</li> <li>• IUPUI</li> <li>• 18-24 yrs old</li> <li>• Female, white</li> <li>• IN</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>Withdrew from career because of eligibility. Compared transition out of sport to transition out of being a 2 sport athlete and into the transition of being a collegiate athlete. Transition out was somewhat welcomed because last few competitions/coaching changes/drama were becoming a stressor – may have made leaving easier. Being able to choose what to do and not forced, social aspects are some of biggest adjustments. Religion, goal setting, friend group, having a job (dividing up interests) all things that helped. Would use golfer as a personal descriptor even though not playing anymore.</p>
2	A02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross country</li> <li>• 4 years played, 4 mo. out</li> <li>• IUPUI</li> <li>• 18-24 yrs old</li> <li>• Female, white</li> <li>• IN</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>Transition into collegiate sports comparable to transition out – some differences. Was well planned for transition because that's her personality type. Her sport is somewhat unique in that she can continue to participate individually – doesn't think she'll ever fully be transitioned out. Found that gaining interviewing skills and utilizing support system (family, fiancé, teammates, advisors) were really important. Important for those transitioning to take steps to accomplish transition.</p>
3	A03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacrosse</li> <li>• 13 years played, 4 mo. Out</li> <li>• Randolph-Macon</li> <li>• 18-24 years old</li> <li>• Female, white</li> <li>• FL</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>Had to work to change routine and stick to a schedule after leaving college/athletics. Working with how to manage free time. Concerned about happiness and making time for things. Uses religion to deal with stress of transitioning and moving away from home. Job of being a mentor helped to give purpose and learned to take own advice she was giving to her mentees. Communication and social support play a big part in it all. Injury is a unique challenge – how to address it without help of athletic trainers? More self-disciplined today than when in sport.</p>
4	A04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Softball</li> <li>• 14 years played, 16 mo. Out</li> <li>• Iowa State University</li> <li>• 18-24 years</li> <li>• Female, white</li> <li>• IA</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>Left sport due to eligibility. Leaving friendships on team was difficult – working to establish new professional relationships. Leaving was always on the brain due to injury. Finding a job after leaving was difficult – finances became a stressor. “Go get it” personality contributed to stress of waiting for a job offer. Other activities provided experience, which helped with job application. Athletes need a resource to better understand what it means to leave athletics – found relatively little that addresses mental health. Lack of competition is difficult. Would have prepared sooner and used time more wisely if able to do it again.</p>

5	A05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track &amp; field</li> <li>• 5 years in, 3 mo. out</li> <li>• Iowa State University</li> <li>• 18-24 years</li> <li>• Male, White</li> <li>• NE</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>Still coaching, which has aided the transition process. Is a very competitive person and it was difficult to adjust to that after sport ended. Competed in sport after graduation so had a bit more time to prepare for transition.</p> <p>Resources at school invested in athlete well-being – losing that after leaving is a unique challenge of being an athlete; having to figure things out on your own.</p> <p>Important to transfer your passion. Had a strong relationship with coach which was beneficial. Also had other activities (e.g., SAC) that contributed to ease of transition process.</p>
6	A06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacrosse</li> <li>• 2 years in, 8 mo. out</li> <li>• Indiana Tech</li> <li>• 25-34 years</li> <li>• Male, White</li> <li>• IN</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>Also served in the Navy. Only transition out of athletics that compares is the transition out of the military. Left because wasn't having fun anymore – was not on scholarship and the time requirement was no longer worth the effort. Loss of social support with each transition. Enjoys the freedom, but understands how some might feel lost or not enjoy not being told what to do. Family support has been beneficial. Feels like the VA doesn't care. Feels like how you exit will determine how you are supported later. Those leaving should have someone to talk to. Really unhappy with how injury is not given the attention and care it needs.</p>
7	A07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacrosse</li> <li>• 4 years in, 6 months out</li> <li>• Methodist University</li> <li>• 18-24 years old</li> <li>• Male, White</li> <li>• NC</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>Biggest concern was working out and how to remain physically active. Worked to learn how to appropriately allocate time once in a full-time job, rather than “giving it your all” as he did in sports. Compared transition to moving to Italy. Was almost ready for a break in sports.</p> <p>Working a job while playing seems to have been beneficial – recommends that all athletes do some type of job while they are playing. Proactive approach is needed to help athletes transition out, whether it's the association or the school itself. Might have done some things different. Important to know what next steps are – making a checklist and setting goals for self.</p>
8	A08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross country</li> <li>• 8 years in, 3 months out</li> <li>• University of Portland</li> <li>• 18-24 years old</li> <li>• Female, White/Hispanic</li> <li>• IN</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>Toughest part of leaving was losing social support. Unique relationship that coach provides and how not having that is difficult. Feels like any transition could really compare, due to culture changes involved with transition. Didn't talk with others when debating next steps. Lack of structure discussed, mainly in regard to running though and having to motivate self to maintain running behaviors. Important to not let athletics completely consume identity and finding other things. Career resources for athletes is important. Successful transition means finding balance.</p>
9	A10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swimming &amp; diving</li> <li>• 16 years in, 1.5 months out</li> <li>• Pomona College</li> </ul>	<p>Also played other sports and spoke of the transition related to those. Played football before but left due to injuries. Remained close to the team. Compared transition out to romantic breakup; lose connections with</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18-24 years old</li> <li>• Male, White</li> <li>• CA</li> <li>• Employed</li> </ul>	<p>those on team. Influence of belief system. Lost piece of self that was tangible evidence of something that defined him. Was prepared for transition, but didn't realize the impact it would have. Adjusting to different mentality outside of the realm of sport. Had to find outlet for competitiveness. Definition of self has changed some. Discussed the influence that other roles (mainly connected to religion) had on the transition; created a sense of community.</p>
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## APPENDIX J

### Military Participant Descriptors

Stage 2 Military Participant Descriptors – Interview Notes			
	ID	Demographics	Interview Notes
1	M01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navy</li> <li>• E4</li> <li>• 6.5 years in</li> <li>• 8 months out</li> <li>• 35-44 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, White</li> <li>• CA</li> </ul>	Felt like he was being overused and underpaid. There really isn't a way to prepare; never really know what's going to happen. Have to go in with strong mental ability or military will wear you down. Beneficial to have some sort of civilian connection, although not sure how to do this. Lose your identity and community when transition out. Identity was given when in the military.
2	M02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army</li> <li>• E5</li> <li>• 5 years in</li> <li>• 5 months out</li> <li>• 25-34 yrs old</li> <li>• Female, White</li> <li>• GA</li> </ul>	Transitioned out due to pregnancy. Concerns around supporting family. Main concern for self was health. Can't relate to any other transition. No structure in lifestyle now like there was in the military; having to make daily goals for herself. Did not have next step established, would have appreciated help with direction. Found it to be a drastic change; starting completely over.
3	M03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marines</li> <li>• E5</li> <li>• 5 years in</li> <li>• 1 month out</li> <li>• 18-24 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, White</li> <li>• PA</li> </ul>	Culture shock both going in and transitioning out. Concerns around getting out and loss of paycheck. Recognizes that resources are available as people transition out but was trying to distance self from military chapter of life. No longer regularly physically active. Freedom of personal expression in life after military. Free of dual responsibility. Had supportive friends.
4	M04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navy</li> <li>• E5</li> <li>• 6 years in</li> <li>• 12 months out</li> <li>• 25-34 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, White</li> <li>• TN</li> </ul>	Attending school, but was not prepared for some of the financial aspects or how long the paperwork would take. Difficult to tailor a transition program to everyone; so many different reasons for leaving the military. Calling own shots was somewhat of a surprise. Stress relief benefits from physical activity. Important to sit down and talk with someone. Psychological impact needs to be better addressed.
5	M06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army</li> <li>• E5</li> <li>• 12 years in</li> <li>• 12 months out</li> <li>• 25-34 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, white</li> <li>• GA</li> </ul>	Decided he'd given the military enough of his time and wanted to pursue other things. Money was biggest concern during transition. Some difficulty getting used to civilian lifestyle. Dealt with toxic leadership. Free time making him aware of other things. Found benefit in hobbies. College is his new mission. Helped create sense of purpose that has benefited the transition. More optimistic today. Enjoying freedom of choice. Successful transition=happiness in self.

6	M07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marines</li> <li>• E5</li> <li>• 5 years in</li> <li>• 4 months out</li> <li>• 18-24 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, white</li> <li>• TN</li> </ul>	Considerations for transitioning out mainly related to attending college and future employment concerns. Transitioning in had similarities to transitioning out. Money was biggest concern. Important to always be prepared. Beneficial to set yourself up for multiple avenues. Discussed the influence of life experience.
7	M08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army</li> <li>• E4</li> <li>• 4 years in</li> <li>• 2 months out</li> <li>• 25-34 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, Hispanic/Black</li> <li>• NY</li> </ul>	Considered time in military to be a big waste of time. Unsatisfied with what he was doing. Created a lack of trust in the military. Mind wandering as a result of not having someone telling him what to do all the time. Desired a therapist who was outside of the military; felt like he'd be able to trust better. Thought it would be important to give time for people to explore their options outside of the military.
8	M09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army</li> <li>• E4</li> <li>• 4 years in</li> <li>• 1 month out</li> <li>• 18-24 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, white</li> <li>• CT</li> </ul>	Joined military to do something different. Financial concerns during transition out. Had a bad attitude towards the end, which influenced transition process. Become a nobody in the process. Needing a purpose to continue to be satisfied outside of military. Importance of being able to talk to someone. Had pride in military position, finding something equivalent. Transitioning is always going to be stressful. Still getting used to new things.
9	M10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navy</li> <li>• E5</li> <li>• 4 years in</li> <li>• 10 months out</li> <li>• 18-24 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, white</li> <li>• GA</li> </ul>	Contract ended. Recommends that everyone prepare as much as you can and do so as soon as possible. Concern around loss of job security. Adjustment to social relationships. Freedom was a big lifestyle change. Important to have a purpose. Attending a military friendly school. Job satisfaction and closeness of relationships are aspects unique to military.
10	M11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coast Guard</li> <li>• E7</li> <li>• 25 years in</li> <li>• 14 months out</li> <li>• 45-54 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, white</li> <li>• OR</li> </ul>	Retired out of Coast Guard. Employment was biggest concern. Adjusting to the pay cut. Leaving allowed him to focus on becoming more family-oriented. Important to have confidence and not worry about the small things. Transition education was very vague. Might have stayed in a bit longer if he could do anything over. Considers himself to be the same person now.
11	M12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marines</li> <li>• 03</li> <li>• 11 years in</li> <li>• 14 months out</li> <li>• 25-34 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, white</li> <li>• SD</li> </ul>	Lose that sense of community when you transition out. Lack of understanding between the military and civilian worlds. Finding purpose in getting to help others. Became his own worst enemy. Enjoyed the military and found his leadership to be helpful. Challenging to find civilian career; narrowly focused. Maybe would have stayed in longer and made better use of resources. Successful transition=staying active/being healthy and employment.

12	M13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air Force</li> <li>• 03</li> <li>• 3 years in</li> <li>• 24 months out</li> <li>• 25-34 yrs old</li> <li>• Female, white</li> <li>• FL</li> </ul>	Was also an NCAA DI athlete. Described similar transitioning out; identity confusion. Didn't think transition would be difficult. Working to find greater purpose. Was giving up what she'd known to try something new; great deal of uncertainty. Culture shock coming back to college. Lifestyle much more relaxing now than when serving. Important to identify veteran community for support during transition.
13	M14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army</li> <li>• 06</li> <li>• 30 years in</li> <li>• 4 months out</li> <li>• 45-54 yrs old</li> <li>• Female, white</li> <li>• IN</li> </ul>	Retired out of military. Had a million concerns, mainly around finances. Creating a new sense of identity, which is still a work in progress. Balancing loyalties and desire to prepare. Wanting to continue to give back. Adjustment to lack of structure. More conscience of lack of ability to structure self. Recognized someone was coming in behind her; questioning importance. Being able to decide what to wear.
14	M15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air Force</li> <li>• E6</li> <li>• 14 years in</li> <li>• 3 months out</li> <li>• 25-34 yrs old</li> <li>• Male, white</li> <li>• IN</li> </ul>	Got tired of the politics in the military. Finances were comfortable, allowed for transition out without that concern. Gave transitioning a lot of thought. Adjusting to differences in social relationships. Person with transition assistance program not completely helpful. Denied health services at the VA. Had great support system. Now responsible to self.
15	M16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air Force</li> <li>• E5</li> <li>• 7 years in</li> <li>• 10 months out</li> <li>• 25-34 yrs old</li> <li>• Female, white</li> <li>• FL</li> </ul>	Entering the military was easier than transitioning out. Going from structured career to freedom; felt like leaving a family. Did not know exactly what next steps were going to be. Transition assistance program didn't relate to her; wasn't sure what questions to ask. Unhappy with schedule. Found that skillset was hard to translate. Important to talk to others. Looking back, would have asked more questions, saved more.



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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Sarah A. Shue

### **Education**

**PhD, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences**, June 2018, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

*Dissertation Title:* Exploring the Impact of Career Transition on Athletes and Military Personnel: A Mixed Methods Study

*Concentration Title:* Providing and Assessing Health Services for the Physical and Psychological Health of Military Personnel

*Minor:* Social and Behavioral Sciences (IU Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health)

**M.S., Sport and Exercise Psychology**, May 2014, Ball State University, Muncie, IN

*Thesis:* A Qualitative Exploration of U.S. Military Service Members' Perspectives on Physical Activity

**B.A., Psychology**, December 2011, Marian University, Indianapolis, IN

*Minor:* Business Administration

### **Positions and Honors**

08/14 – current	Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Health Sciences, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Indiana University - IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN
2016 - 2017	Graduate Research Assistant, Fairbanks School of Public Health, Indiana University - IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN
2012 - 2014	Graduate Research Assistant, School of Physical Education, Sport, and Exercise, Sport and Exercise Psychology - Ball State, Muncie, IN
2012 - 2014	Graduate Teaching Assistant, School of Physical Education, Sport, and Exercise, Ball State, Muncie, IN
2010 – 2011	Assistant Women's Tennis Coach - Cardinal Ritter High School, Indianapolis, IN
2009 – 2011	Peer Tutor - Marian University, Indianapolis, IN

### **Professional Memberships:**

Current (2015)	Society of Military Psychology, American Psychological Association (APA) Division 19
Current (2015)	Exercise and Sports Psychology, APA Division 47
Current (2014)	Association for Applied Psychology (AASP)
Current (2012)	Psi Chi – International Honor Society in Psychology

### **Selected Honors & Awards:**

2015	IUPUI ISSEC Student Idea Pitch Competition Finalist
2014	Cum Laude, Ball State University
2014	Ball State University Sport and Exercise Psychology Student Researcher of the Year
2014	Ball State University Robert and Charlotte Korsgaard Outstanding Graduate Student Award Nominee
2011	Summa Cum Laude, Marian University

### **Research/Scholarship**

#### **Research Focus:**

Anxiety management and reduction techniques. The application of a physical activity-based intervention that utilizes psychological skills to improve quality of life. Promotion of evidence-based health and wellness programs and implementation of these interventions into practice. Quality of life improvement of military veterans. Development and implementation of health and wellness programs for this population.

#### **Research Support:**

08/14 – 06/18	Indiana University Graduate School Block Grant – Tuition Support Awarded to the Health Sciences Department
08/2016-5/2018	Massage Therapy Foundation - \$30,000 Massage Perceptions and Experiences for Individuals with Amputations Munk (PI) Role: Co-Investigator
2017	IUPUI Graduate and Professional Student Government - \$500 Travel Grant
2013	Ball State University ASPIRE Student Travel Grant - \$100

#### **Publications:**

**Shue, S.** & Warden, S. (2017). Full-Text Publication of Abstract Presented Work in Sport and Exercise Psychology. *BMJ Sport & Exercise Medicine*. (In press).

Watson, D., Ray, B., Robinson, L., Xu, H., Edwards, R., Salyers, M., Hill, J., & **Shue, S.** (2017) Developing Substance Use Programming for Person-Oriented Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT): Protocol for a pilot randomized controlled trial. *Pilot and Feasibility Studies*, 3(1), 73.

**Shue, S.,** McGuire, A., & Matthias, M. (2017). Facilitators and Barriers to Implementation of a Peer Support Intervention for Patients with Chronic Pain. (Submitted to Pain Medicine)

Watson, D. P., Adams, E., **Shue, S.,** Coates, H., McGuire, A., Chesher, J., Jackson, J., Omenka, I. (2017). Identifying and defining constructs comprising the external implementation context: an integrative systematic review. *Implementation Science*. (In press).

**Shue, S.,** Kania-Richmond, A., Mulvihill, T., & Munk, N. (2017). Treating individuals with amputations in therapeutic massage and bodywork practice: A qualitative study. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 32, 98-104.

Munk, N., Freeland, E., **Shue, S.,** Mannheimer, S., Bair, M. J. Massage combined with mirror therapy for phantom limb pain: An experimental single-subject withdrawal design case series. (Submitted to PLOS ONE).

Munk, N., **Shue, S.,** Freeland, E., Ralston, R., & Boulanger, K. T. (2016). Identifying Inconsistencies and Reporting Deficits in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (TMB) Case Reports Authored by TMB Practitioners: a TMB-Adapted CAsE REport (CARE) Guidelines Audit Through 2014. *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork*, 9(3), 3.

Razon, S., & **McGary, S.** Determinants and interventions for exercise behavior: Toward adoption and adherence. In L. Gershgoren, R. Lidor, & G. Tenenbaum (Eds.), *Fundamental issues in sport and exercise psychology*, Netanya, Israel: Wingate Institute.

### **Manuscripts in Development:**

**Shue, S.,** Blom, L., Mulvihill, T., & Razon, S. (2017). Perceptions of Physical Activity Among Post-Deployment Military Personnel: A Qualitative Exploration. (In preparation for submission)

### **International Presentations:**

**Shue, S.,** Watson, D., Matthias, M., Miller, K., & Munk, N. (2018, October). Exploring the Impact of Career Transition on Athletes and Military Personnel: A Mixed Methods Study. Submitted for lecture presentation at the annual Association for Applied Sport Psychology Conference, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Munk, N., **Shue, S.,** Rattray, N. Massage Perceptions and Experiences for Individuals with Amputations. Oral presentation accepted for the *International Congress on Integrative Medicine & Health*, May 8-11, 2018 in Baltimore, MD.

**Shue, S.** & Warden, S. (2017, October). Full-Text Publication of Abstract Presented Work in Sport and Exercise Psychology. Poster Presentation at the annual Association for Applied Sport Psychology Conference, Orlando, FL.

Munk, N., Benjamin, E., Davies, A., **Shue, S.**, & Bair, M.J. (2016, May). Trigger-Point Self-Care for Chronic Neck Pain: Pilot and Feasibility. Poster Presentation at the 2016 International Congress Integrative Medicine & Health Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Munk, N., Freeland, E., Mannheimer, S., MD **Shue, S.**, & Bair, M.J. (2016, May). Therapeutic Massage Combined with Mirror Therapy for Phantom Limb Pain: Two Experimental Cases. Poster Presentation at the 2016 International Congress Integrative Medicine & Health Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada.

**Shue, S.** Richmond, A.K., Mulvihill, T., & Munk, N. (2016, May) Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (TMB) for Individuals with Amputations: A Qualitative Study of TMB Practitioners. Oral Presentation at the 2016 International Massage Therapy Research Conference, Seattle, WA.

Munk, N., **Shue S.**, Freeland, E., Ralston, R.K., & Boulanger, K. (2016, May) Identifying Inconsistencies and Reporting Deficits in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (TMB) Case Reports Authored by TMB Practitioners: A TMB Adapted CASE REport (CARE) Guidelines Audit Through 2014. Oral Presentation at the 2016 International Massage Therapy Research Conference, Seattle, WA.

**Shue, S.**, Razon, S., Blom, L., & Mulvihill, T. (2015, October). U.S. Military Service Members' Perspectives on Physical Activity: A Qualitative Exploration. Research presented at the annual Association for Applied Sport Psychology Conference, Indianapolis, IN.

**McGary, S.**, & Kellogg, J. (2013, October). Experience in Sport Performance, the Practice of Imagery and the Effect of Both on Performance Anxiety. Research presented at the annual Association for Applied Sport Psychology Conference, New Orleans, LA.

### **Regional Presentations:**

**Shue, S.**, Bair, M. J., & Matthias, M. A. (2016, April). Exploring Clinician Perceptions of a Veteran Peer Support Intervention to Inform Implementation. Poster presented at the IUPUI Research Day, Indianapolis, IN.

**Shue, S.**, Munk, N., Freeland, E., Ralston, R., & Boulanger, K. (2015, April). Identifying Inconsistencies and Reporting Deficits in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (TMB) Case Reports: A Systematic Review and TMB Adapted CASE REport (CARE) Guidelines Audit. Poster presented at the IUPUI Research Day, Indianapolis, IN.



Freeland, E., **Shue, S.**, & Munk, N. (2015, April). Massage Therapy Combined with Components of Mirror Therapy is Helpful for a Man with Phantom Limb Pain: Case Report. Poster presented at the Life-Health Sciences Internship Program at IUPUI, VanNuys Medical Science Building Atrium, Indianapolis, IN.

**McGary, S.**, & Kellogg, J. (2012, April). Experience in Sport Performance, the Practice of Imagery and the Effect of Both on Performance Anxiety. Oral presentation at annual Butler University Undergraduate Research Conference, Indianapolis, IN.

### **Additional Research Activities:**

2016	Research Assistant. Dissemination and Implementation Science Core (DISC). Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health. Indianapolis, IN.
2016	Research Assistant. Evaluation of the IU Healthy Results Program. Diabetes Translational Research Center (M. deGroot). Indianapolis, IN
Current (2015)	Research Assistant. Evaluation of a Peer Coach-Led Intervention to Improve Pain Symptoms (M. Matthias). Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center. Indianapolis, IN
2015	Evaluation Project/Student Semester Project. Evaluation Methods for the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation School Health Program.
2013	Research Assistant. Soccer for Peace in Jordan: A Qualitative Assessment of Program Impact (J. Cooper). Federal Grant - Ball State, Muncie, IN
2013	Research Assistant. Identity Perceptions of Adult Recreational Sport/Physical Activity Competitors; Subjective Evaluation of Self and Abilities (K. Hurley) - Ball State, Muncie, IN

### **Teaching**

2012 - 2014	PEP 409, Sport and Exercise Psychology (Co-Instructor as needed)
2012 - 2014	EXSCI 360, Exercise Psychology (Co-Instructor as needed)
2012 - 2013	PFW (Multiple Sections), Fitness Walking

### **Service**

2017 -	Robin's Nest of Indy, Inc., Indianapolis, IN
2014	Registration/T-shirts/Website committee member, Taking Back April: Relay for Nonviolence, Ball State University, Muncie, IN
2013	Fundraiser co-creator, Dodgeball Tournament, Ball State University, Muncie, IN

### **Additional Activities**

2016 (July 18)	Invited guest speaking to Social Work - Executive Leadership course
2013 - 2014	Consulting. Ball State University ROTC (Reserved Officer Training Corps)